

Dasavatar -Ten Manifestations of Godhead

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Preface

he living being or individual soul (jīva) is an atomic conscious particle of the

Lord's marginal potency, which is comprised of eternal existence, consciousness and bliss (saccidānanda). All souls have an eternal and true relationship with God, but by becoming averse to Him due to misuse of their minute independence they desire to enjoy sensual pleasure instead. Consequently, the māyā potency of the Lord puts the jīvas into illusion by providing non-eternal relationships. As long as the soul does not become inclined towards serving the Lord with affection, he will not attain emancipation from the clutches of material nature, which inflicts all kinds of miseries on him.

anityam asukhaṁ lokam imaṁ prāpya bhajasva mām (Bhagavad-gītā 9.3)

The Lord is the rescuer of the fallen and descends into the material world out of His infinite compassion, to emancipate the conditioned souls. The Lord has infinite manifestations in which He reveals Himself. In the eternal abode, the Lord's associates serve Him in different relationships. Therefore, He manifests in various forms, so as to facilitate the jīvas' desire to serve Him in a form suitable to their taste. This way they can free themselves from their material condition and become eligible for supreme bliss by attaining love of Godhead.

The material world can be compared to a well. When a bucket falls into a well, metal hooks may be thrown in to lift the bucket out. Similarly, the Lord descends in various forms into this world to attract the jīvas by the splendor of His wonderful pastimes. The all-powerful infinite Absolute can never be many. He is one. Although the Lord is one, He nonetheless has infinite pastimes and forms. The demigods are but manifestations of the energy of God.

Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself descends in different forms to diminish the burden of the earth, to annihilate the miscreants and to deliver the pious. Brahmā, Śiva and other demigods and sages, in their prayers to Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the womb, as well as Śrī Prahlāda Mahārāja in his prayer to Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva, have referred to the various avatāras (descents) of Śrī Kṛṣṇa as follows:

*matsyāśva-kacchapa-nṛsiṁha-varāha-haṁsarājanya-vipra-vibudheṣu
kṛtāvatāraḥ tvam pāsi nas tri-bhuvanaṁ ca yathādhuneśa bhāram bhuvo hara*

yadūttama vandanam te

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 10.2.40)

“O Supreme Lord, You previously descended as a fish (Matsya), a horse (Hayagrīva), a tortoise (Kūrma), a half man/half lion (Nṛsimhadeva), a boar (Varāha), a swan (Haṁsa), a warrior (Lord Rāmacandra or Paraśurāma) and a learned sage among the demigods (Vāmanadeva), to protect us and the three worlds by Your mercy. Now please protect us again by removing the burden of the earth in the same way. O Kṛṣṇa, best of the Yadus, I respectfully submit my prayer unto You.”

*itthaṁ nṛ-tiryag-ṛṣi-deva-jhaṣāvatārair lokān vibhāvayasi haṁsi jagat praīpān
dharmaṁ mahā-puruṣa pāsi yugānuvṛttaṁchannaḥ kalau yad abhavas tri-yugo
‘tha sa tvam*

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 7.9.38)

“O Lord, In Your various manifestations as a human being (Kṛṣṇa or Rāma), an animal (Varāha), a great saint (Paraśurāma), a demigod (Vāmanadeva) and an aquatic (Matsya or Kūrma), You maintain the entire creation in different planetary systems, annihilate the demoniac and protect the principles of religion according to the yuga (specific era). However, in the age of Kali You do not assert Yourself, and therefore You are known as Tri-yuga, the Lord who appears in three yugas.”

The most merciful avatāra of Kali-yuga, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu, constantly tasted the nectar of Śrī Jayadeva’s Gīta-govinda at the home of Kāśi Mīśra during His final pastimes in Śrī Puruṣottama-dhāma:

*caṇḍīdāsa, vidyāpati, rāyera nāṭaka-gīti, karṇāmṛta, śrī-gīta-govindasvarūpa-
rāmānanda-sane, mahāprabhu rātri-dine, gāya, śune—parama ānanda*

(Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya 2.77)

svarūpa gāya vidyāpati, gīta-govinda-gīti, śuni' prabhura juḍāila kāṇa

(Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Antya 17.62)

Gīta-govinda and Daśāvatāra-stotra, both written by Śrī Jayadeva Gosvāmī, are still being sung daily before the Deity of Lord Jagannātha for His pleasure. Jayadeva Gosvāmī's Daśāvatāra-stotra is respected everywhere in India. The Daśāvatāra Deities are worshipped daily in the Jagannātha Temple at Śrī Puruṣottama-dhāma and many other temples of India. In the Vaiṣṇava lineages of Assam harināma-sankīrtana is performed, by singing about the appearance and pastimes of the ten avatāras. By all this, it is understood that out of countless manifestations of the Supreme, Daśāvatāra occupy a special position and the glories of Matsya, Kūrma, Varāha, Nṛsiṃha, Vāmana, Paraśurāma, Rāma, Baladeva, Buddha and Kalki are well known. In order to remember the appearance and pastimes of these ten avatāras, a short biography of Them has been given in this book. Unalloyed devotees, under the shelter of mahā-bhāgavata Śrī Jayadeva Gosvāmī, offer their prayers to the ten avatāras of Śrī Kṛṣṇa while remembering Their pastimes, and always beg for Their mercy.

Vaiṣṇava dāsānudāsa,

—Tridaṇḍi Bhikṣu Śrī Bhakti Ballabh Tīrtha

Introduction

Among the created living beings of this world, the human birth is best due to

endowment of the special quality of power of discrimination between good and bad and eternal and non-eternal. However, the perceived physical bodies of human beings are all non-eternal. Physical bodies are in the grip of numerous births and deaths, and are subject to many other drawbacks. If the physical body is noneternal then the body's sense organs must also be non-eternal, and whatever is perceived by non-eternal sense organs must also be non-eternal. Therefore, if there should be any eternal entity, it must exist beyond the comprehension of human material non-eternal sense organs.

Furthermore, beyond the existence of the physical body, a human being can directly feel the existence of mind, intellect and perverted ego. As the human being is of a finite nature, it naturally follows that his mental and intellectual capacity will also be finite. The existence of perverted ego can be perceived by the presence of specific thoughts such as thinking that one belongs to this or that country; this or that religion; that one speaks this or that language or belongs to this or that group—whatever it may be. It may be questioned whether after the death of the physical body there is the existence of any such nationalist, religious or language groups—in fact, it may be pertinent to ask whether everything is destroyed or if there is the existence of a subtle body consisting of mind, intelligence and perverted ego or even beyond that, the existence of an eternal entity.

If human beings are to be considered non-eternal then how is it that they desire eternal existence, knowledge and bliss? Human beings devoid of the attributes of eternal existence, knowledge and bliss, logically cannot express the desire to live in this world eternally, to attain complete knowledge and complete bliss.

Indian saints belonging to the theistic spiritual category have a long heritage of research and experience to support a definitive answer to this question. In this material universe we perceive apparently limitless non-eternal planets, so it is possible for the Supreme Lord to have infinite spiritual transcendental realms. Therefore, there are infinite transcendental forms of the Supreme Lord to preside over these realms. These Forms of the Lord are called avatāras. In the West scholars have used the word incarnations, but this is not correct, as it refers to a rebirth in the flesh, whereas Godhead is completely transcendental. To understand the realization of the Indian saints, it is essential that one be acquainted with their use of words or terminology. Avatāra literally means 'avatāran' or God's descent on earth. God (the Supreme Lord) is all-existence, all-knowledge and all-bliss and therefore His avatāra (descent) is also eternal.

Because the Supreme Lord is infinite, everything about Him is also infinite. God has created countless species according to His plan. He has created fish in this world in accordance with the form of the Eternal Fish God; species of tortoise in accordance with the Eternal Tortoise God; species of boar in accordance with the Eternal Boar God and so on. It should never be said that Bhagavān (God, the possessor of all opulences) has appeared as a fish in accordance with the created non-eternal species of this world. Therefore, the word ‘incarnation’ should not be used as the meaning of the Sanskrit word avatāra. ‘Descent’ may be used but it will be better if one adopts avatāra.

Śrīla Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Ṭhākura, who in his elaborate Anubhāṣya commentary on Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā, Chapter 5, refers to many scriptural evidences of Brahmasaṁhitā, Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, Mahābhārata, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī’s Laghu-bhāgavatāmṛta and others, has stated: “All forms of Paramātmā Hari (the Supreme Lord) are eternal and They appear in this world repeatedly. These Divine Forms are devoid of all the defects of the material non-eternal forms produced by the material energy of this world. The Supreme Lord is the transcendental condensed form of all-existence, all-knowledge and all-bliss (it is better to say that these Divine Forms appear and disappear within different universes at different times because They have no birth or death like material bodies)”.

There are many such Sanskrit derived words that have no equivalent expression in the English language. Sometimes, when people do not understand Indian spiritual words, they immediately remark that these words are archaic or belong to the realm of mythology. Of all the infinite spiritual forms of God, Kṛṣṇa is the highest. Kṛṣṇa is Original Bhagavān in whom all mellows of delightful relations exist.

The Supreme Lord—Ultimate Reality, always exists. Human beings are finite beings. If one accepts that human beings can determine their own cause by means of the material senses, material mind or material intellect then that will be a mentally or intellectually concocted thing. That will not be Reality. If Reality is in fact Reality, then He must always exist. We are to find the way to see, to realize the Truth. He cannot be manufactured in the factory of human mental or intellectual capacity.

Western philosophers also corroborate that the criterion of the Absolute is ‘for Itself and by Itself’. Indian saints say ‘He’ instead of ‘It’, so therefore, the

Absolute is ‘for Himself and by Himself’. Nobody can know Him by adopting a challenging mood. He is unchallengeable self-effulgent Truth. He can be realized only by His own grace, and grace descends only to a completely surrendered soul. Hence, Ultimate Reality descends. He who descends is called avatāra. The word avatāra is used by self-realized souls as per evidence found in the authentic scriptures.

(1)

pralaya-payodhi-jāle dhṛtavān asi vedam vihita-vahitra-caritram akhedam

keśava dhṛta-mīna-śarīra jaya jagadīśa hare (2)

kṣitir iha vipulatare tiṣṭhati tava pṛṣṭhe dharāṇi-dhāraṇa-kiṇa-cakra-gariṣṭhe

keśava dhṛta-kūrma-śarīra jaya jagadīśa hare (3)

vasati daśana-śikhare dharāṇī tava lagnā śaśini kalaṅka-kaleva nimagnā

keśava dhṛta-śūkara-rūpa jaya jagadīśa hare (4)

tava kara-kamala-vare nakham adbhuta-śṛṅgam dalita-hiraṇyakaśipu-tanu-bhṛṅgam

keśava dhṛta-narahari-rūpa jaya jagadīśa hare (5)

chalayasi vikramaṇe balim adbhuta-vāmana pada-nakha-nīra-janita-jana-pāvana

keśava dhṛta-vāmana-rūpa jaya jagadīśa hare (6)

kṣatriya-rudhira-maye jagad-apagata-pāpam snapayasi payasi śamita-bhava-
tāpam

keśava dhṛta-bhṛgupati-rūpa jaya jagadīśa hare(7)

vitarsi dikṣu raṇe dik-pati-kamanīyaṁ daśa-mukha-mauli-balim ramaṇīyam

keśava dhṛta-rāma-śarīra jaya jagadīśa hare (8)

vahasi vapuṣi viśade vasaṇaṁ jaladābhaṁ hala-hati-bhīti-milita-yamunābham

keśava dhṛta-haladhara-rūpa jaya jagadīśa hare (9)

nindasi yajña-vidher ahaha śruti-jātaṁ sadaya-hṛdaya darśita-paśu-ghātam

keśava dhṛta-buddha-śarīra jaya jagadīśa hare (10)

mleccha-nivaha-nidhane kalayasi karavālaṁ dhūmaketum iva kim api karālam

keśava dhṛta-kalki-śarīra jaya jagadīśa hare (11)

śrī-jayedeva-kaver idam uditam udāraṁ śṛṇu sukha-daṁ śubha-daṁ bhava-
sāram

keśava dhṛta-daśa-vidha-rūpa jaya jagadīśa hare (12)

vedān uddharate jaganti vahate bhū-golaṁ udbibhrate daityaṁ dārayate balim

chalayate kṣatra-kṣayaṁ kurvate paulastyam jayate halaṁ kalayate kārūṇyam
ātanvate mleccchān mūrchayate daśakṛti-kṛte kṛṣṇāya tubhyaṁ namaḥ

Matsya Kurma

Varaha Parasurama

Budha

Varaha Narasingha

Ramachandra Baladeva

Kalki

Sri Matsya-Avatara

Matsya-avatāra is the first of the ten avatāras. Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī has discussed infinite avatāras in his abridged general review of the Prime Original Supreme Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, in Śrī Caitanya-Caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā, Chapter 20. There, he writes that līlā-avatāra is one of the six distinct kinds of principal descents of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Among līlā-avatāras, the first is Matsya-avatāra¹[\[1\]](#). There are countless numbers of līlā-avatāras mentioned in Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta. In his commentary on Verse 245, Chapter 20, Madhya-līlā, Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Sarasvatī has discussed twenty-five principal līlā-avatāras. Chapter 3 of the 1st Canto of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam also describes various descents of the Lord and Their characteristics.

*saṅkarṣaṇa, matsyādika,—dui bheda tānra saṅkarṣaṇa—puruṣāvatāra,
līlāvatāra āra*

(Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya 20.244)

“The first personal expansion is Saṅkarṣaṇa, and the others are avatāras like the fish avatāra. Saṅkarṣaṇa is an expansion of the Puruṣa, or Viṣṇu. The expansions such as Matsya appear in different yugas for specific pastimes.”

līlāvatāra kṛṣṇera nā yāya gaṇana pradhāna kariyā kahi dig-daraśana

matsya, kūrma, raghunātha, nṛsimha, vāmana varāhādi lekhā yānra nā yāya gaṇana

(Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya 20.297298)

“No one can count the innumerable pastime avatāras of Lord Kṛṣṇa, but I shall describe the principal ones. Some of the pastime avatāras are Matsya, Kūrma, Lord Rāmacandra, Lord Nṛsimha, Lord Vāmana and Lord Varāha. There is no end to Them.”

Among the eighteen Purāṇas, Matsya Purāṇa describes the pastimes of Matsya-avatāra. When Śaunaka and other resident sages of Naimiṣāranya expressed their desire to hear the pastimes of Matsya-avatāra from Śrī Ugraśravā (Sūta Gosvāmī), the son of Śrī Lomaharṣaṇa Sūta, he spoke as follows:

“In ancient times, the son of the sun-god, King Manu, entrusted the kingdom to his son and performed severe austerities for ten thousand years. When Brahmā became pleased by his austerities and wished to confer a boon upon him, the king prayed to grandfather Brahmā and said, ‘Please give me the boon that I may save the living beings of this world and the world itself during the time of annihilation.’ Brahmā said, ‘So be it!’ Then he disappeared while the devas (demigods) showered flowers from heaven. Thereafter, one day when Manu was offering oblations to the ancestors while sitting in his āśrama, a ‘saphari’ (a kind of tiny fish—a minnow) jumped into his hands. Out of compassion, and for the safety of the small fish, he placed it in his water-pot. Overnight the fish became as large as a finger, and finding it difficult to stay in the small water-pot, it

prayed to the king, ‘Please save me! Please save me!’ Feeling compassion for the fish, Manu transferred it to a clay vessel. The fish again expanded, but this time to the length of three hands within one night. It expressed its difficulties by saying to the king, ‘I have surrendered to you. Please save me! Please save me!’ Then Manu put the fish in a well but once again, due to a shortage of space, he put it in a lake and then in the Ganges where it continued expanding greatly until he had no choice but to transfer it to the ocean. What had originally been a tiny fish now occupied an entire ocean. Manu became afraid upon seeing the whole ocean occupied, and began to think that this must surely be the Supreme Lord, Vāsudeva, otherwise how could His body have expanded to the size of 200,000 yojanas¹? Understanding the Lord to have appeared as a fish, Manu offered his obeisances to Him. After accepting his obeisances, Matsya spoke to the king, making him aware of His real nature, ‘O King, the earth will soon be flooded with water. I have a boat made by the demigods that is intended to save all the living entities. You should put the sweat-born or insects, the earth-born or those born from shoots and sprouts, the womb-born and all other helpless living beings on the boat to save them from the imminent deluge. When a strong storm approaches, you should tie the boat to my horn²[\[2\]](#). You will become the prajāpati (progenitor) after the universal dissolution of the whole world. In this way, at the beginning of satya-yuga you will become the omniscient king of the next manvantara.’

After that, when Manu asked when the annihilation would happen and how the living beings would be saved, Lord Matsya informed him of the coming of drought, famine and fire burning the earth, culminating in the submersion of the three worlds due to excessive rain. Everything would be reduced to one ocean (ekarnāva). As per the Lord’s words, at the time of annihilation Lord Janārdana appeared in the form of a fish with a horn protruding from His head. The great serpent Vāsuki came to Manu to act as a rope. Pious Manu, the knower of dharma, gathered together all the living beings by his yogic spiritual power and put them safely onto the boat. He tied the snake to the horn of the Divine Fish. Lord Matsya, Brahmā, Soma, Sūrya, the four worlds³[\[3\]](#), the pious river Nārmada, Mārkaṇḍeya Ṛṣi, Lord Bhāva (Mahādeva), the Vedas, Purāṇas and all kinds of knowledge were manifested in Manu. Lord Matsya also told Manu that at the end of Cakṣuṣa-manvantara, when the world after dissolution would become ekarnāva, He would once again appear to rescue and re-establish the Vedas.”

The story of Matsya-avatāra has also been described in Chapter 24 of the 8th

Canto of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam. Parīkṣit Mahārāja desired to hear about the pastimes of Matsya-avatāra, the earliest or first of the ten avatāras, and spoke to Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī as follows:

śrī rajovāca bhagavañ chrotum icchāmi harer adbhuta-karmaṇaḥ

avatāra-kathām ādyām māyā-matsya-viḍambanam

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 8.24.1)

“Mahārāja Parīkṣit said, ‘The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Hari, is eternally situated in His transcendental position, yet He descends to this material world and manifests Himself in various forms. His first descent was that of a great fish. O most powerful Śukadeva Gosvāmī, I wish to hear from you the pastimes of that manifestation of the Lord as a fish.’ ”

One day of Brahmā is called a kalpa. Brahmā’s one day is beyond human calculation. The durations of the four ages or yugas have been described as follows: the duration of Kali-yuga is 432,000 solar years, double this is the duration of Dvāpara-yuga, triple is that of Tretā-yuga and quadruple is the duration of Satyayuga. The four yugas combined are called one divya-yuga or caturyuga. The reign of one Manu is comprised of 71 such divya or catur-yugas. The span of life of fourteen Manus is the duration of one day of the life of Brahmā⁴[\[4\]](#). Similar also is the duration of one night of Brahmā. At the end of one day of Brahmā or at the end of a kalpa, partial annihilation takes place.

At the end of his day, Brahmā was feeling drowsy and desired to sleep. At that time, an asura (demon) named Hayagrīva stole the Vedas from the mouth of Brahmā and entered into the waters of annihilation. Brahmā then wondered how, at the beginning of his day, he was going to perform the task of creating the world in the absence of the Vedas. Thinking like this, Brahmā took shelter of Lord Viṣṇu. At the beginning of the Svāyambhuva-manvantara, Lord Viṣṇu in His appearance as a fish, killed the demon Hayagrīva and rescued the Vedas. He then delivered the Vedas to Brahmā:

*atīta-pralayāpāya utthitāya sa vedhase hatvāsuram hayagrīvaṁ vedān
pratyāharad dhariḥ*

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 8.24.57)

“At the end of the last inundation (during the reign of Svāyambhuva Manu) the Supreme Personality of Godhead killed the demon Hayagrīva and delivered all the Vedic literatures to Lord Brahmā when he awoke from sleeping.”

Lord Matsya appeared twice in this kalpa. First, during the Svāyambhuva-manvantara, he killed the demon Hayagrīva and rescued the Vedic literature. Later, at the end of the Cakṣusa-manvantara, He appeared and bestowed His mercy on King Satyavrata.

In the commentary on Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, 8th Canto, Chapter 24, Verse 37 published by Śrī Caitanya Maṭha, the explanation of a statement from Laghubhāgavatāmṛta is as follows:

Agastya Muni cursed Svāyambhuva Manu, which caused an annihilation to occur in the middle of the manvantara. This annihilation has been described in the Matsya Purāṇa. During the Cakṣusa-manvantara, the annihilation began suddenly by the will of the Lord. In Viṣṇu-dharmottara, this story was narrated to Vajra by Mārkaṇḍeya Ṛṣi. Generally, annihilation does not take place at the end of a manvantara. At the end of the Cakṣusa-manvantara, by His māyā potency, the Supreme Lord displayed the annihilation to Satyavrata as in a dream. Speaking in this way, Śrīpāda Śrīdhara Svāmī (the original commentator on Śrīmad Bhāgavatam) has not accepted the annihilation at the end of a manvantara.

There is nothing that the Supreme Lord will not do for the pleasure of His devotee. In reality, it is only the devotee who is the root cause of the appearance of the Supreme Lord. To accept the service of His devotee, the Supreme Lord performs the pastime of being incapable. It was to accept the service of His devotee, Satyavrata, that the Lord first performed the pastime of being incapable.

During the Cakṣuṣa-manvantara, a devotee of Lord Nārāyaṇa named King Satyavrata performed severe austerities by drinking only water. One day, Satyavrata was offering oblations in the Kṛtamālā River when he saw a tiny fish in the water cupped in his palms. Satyavrata, the king of Drāvīda, threw the fish into the water. The small fish then said in great distress, “O merciful king! I am a small fish; big fish will eat Me. Knowing this, why did you throw Me into the river? I am very scared. Please protect Me.” Hearing the distressful words of the fish, the king placed the fish in his water-pot and went back to his āśrama. Within one night, the small fish grew so much that it was difficult for it to remain in the water-pot. The fish again offered prayers expressing that it did not want to remain in that difficult condition. It wanted to be kept in a bigger pot where it could move about freely, so the sage put the fish into the water of a big wok. But in that place, within one muhūrta (forty-eight minutes), it again expanded to the length of three hands. Upon the repeated prayers of the fish, it was placed in a pond, then a large freshwater lake, and finally the ocean. While entering into the ocean, the fish spoke to King Satyavrata in a humorous way, “There are many large crocodiles and other creatures in the ocean; they will eat Me. It is not proper to leave Me here.” Hearing the sweet words of the fish, the king understood that it was not an ordinary fish. This wonderful entity was the Supreme Lord Himself in the form of a fish. The king replied, “You are making fun of me in Your form as a fish. Actually who are You? Within one day You have occupied the entire area of this huge freshwater lake, 800 miles long. I have never seen or heard of such an amazing and powerful aquatic. You must surely be the Supreme Lord, Hari. You have taken the form of an aquatic to favor all the living beings. I am taking shelter of You. Please grace me. Although all Your līlā-avatāras are for the eternal welfare of living beings, what is the purpose of Your appearance as a fish? Please tell me.”

In reply, Supreme Lord Hari in the form of a fish said, “On the seventh day from today, the three worlds will be inundated by the waters of annihilation. I will send you a big boat at that time. You should put all kinds of herbs (medicinal plants) and seeds on the boat. Surrounded by the seven great sages, you should ride on that great boat with all the living entities and float freely on the ocean of annihilation. When your boat trembles due to the force of a strong wind, you should tie the boat to My horn using the great serpent Vāsuki. I will pull the boat with you and the sages until the night of Brahmā ends. At that time you will come to know of My glories.” Having said that, Śrī Hari disappeared. After His disappearance, King Satyavrata was waiting for the time foretold by Śrī Hari. He sat down on kuśa grass facing the northeastern direction and meditated on the

lotus feet of Lord Matsya. At that time, he saw that terrible rainfall was swelling the ocean to cover the land on the shore and was gradually covering the whole earth. Being very much afraid, the king began to look for shelter. Suddenly he saw that a great boat had come to him. Taking herbs, seeds and so on with him, the king boarded the boat along with the best of the brāhmanas. The brāhmanas asked the king to meditate on Lord Keśava for protection from this danger. Upon meditating steadily, the king saw that Lord Matsya had appeared. His body was one million miles (400,000 krośas)⁵[\[5\]](#) long, glowing like gold and had a horn on His head. As instructed, the king used Vāsuki as a rope and tied him to the horn of the giant fish. Then he offered prayers to Lord Matsya. Being satisfied by his prayers, the Supreme Lord enlightened the king with knowledge of the Supreme Truth. By the mercy of Lord Viṣṇu in the form of a fish, the king became fully enlightened and took birth as Vaivasvata Manu (in the form of Srāddhadeva) in the present kalpa.

pralaya-payodhi-jale dhṛtavān asi vedaṁ vihita-vahitra-caritram akhedam

keśava dhṛta-mīna śarīra jaya jagadīśa hare

(Śrī Jayadeva’s Daśāvatāra-stotra, 1st Verse)

“O Keśava! O Lord of the universe! O Lord Hari, who have assumed the form of a fish! All glories unto You! You easily acted as a boat in the form of a giant fish just to give protection to the Vedas, which had become immersed in the turbulent sea of devastation.”

Sri Kurma-Avatara

The second avatāra of the Lord among the ten avatāras is Kūrma-avatāra, the

tortoise avatāra.

*tatrāpi devasambhūtyām vairājasyābhavat sutaḥ ajito nāma bhagavān amśena
jagataḥ patih*

*payodhim yena nirmathya surāṇām sādhitā sudhā bhramamāṇo ‘mbhasi dhṛtaḥ
kūrma-rūpeṇa mandaraḥ*

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 8.5.9 -10)

In the sixth manvantara, a manifested form of Lord Viṣṇu named Ajita appeared as the son of Vairāja from the womb of Devasambhūti. Lord Ajita caused the churning of the Ocean of Milk and produced nectar for the demigods. In the form of a tortoise, He held the great mountain known as Mandara on His back in the ocean.

The following is a brief account of Śukadeva Gosvāmī’s description, which was spoken to satisfy Parīkṣit Mahārāja’s desire to hear these pastimes in detail.

Once, the great sage Durvāsā came across Indra, the king of the devas, riding on his elephant. Durvāsā Muni presented Indra with his flower garland, but Indra who was proud of his opulence, did not pay attention to the garland and threw it on the head of the elephant named Airāvata. The garland fell from the elephant and was crushed under its foot. Seeing this insult of the garland he had given, Durvāsā Muni became enraged and cursed Indra by swearing, “Be bereft of all prosperity!” Thus, Indra and the other demigods lost all their strength and prosperity. After some time, the demigods were defeated in a war with the demons and many of them lost their lives. Most of the demigods were unable to regain their lives even though the Vedic sages were invested with mystic powers and the knowledge of mantras and techniques to bring the dead back to life under certain conditions. Therefore, the demigods held a meeting but as they were unable to find any means of retaliation, they approached Brahmā at Sumeru Mountain and informed him about their miserable state. Upon seeing the weak state of the demigods and the powerful state of the demons, Brahmā meditated on the Supreme Lord with full concentration. Thereafter, he joy-fully spoke to the demigods: “Only by exclusive devotion to the lotus feet of Supreme Lord Śrī

Hari can you be saved from this dangerous situation.” Along with other demigods Brahmā then went to Śvetadvīpa, which is situated in the Ocean of Milk, and offered many Vedic prayers to the Supreme Lord, Viṣṇu. Satisfied by the prayers of the demigods, Kṣīrodakaśāyī Viṣṇu appeared, but due to His dazzling effulgence none of the demigods other than Brahmā were able to see Him. Then, Lord Brahmā with Lord Maheśvara again offered prayers. Satisfied by the prayers of Brahmā and the other demigods, Lord Ajita suggested that the demigods should skillfully make a truce with the demons—the disciples of Śukrācārya. The Lord told them to use Mandara Mountain as a churning rod and the serpent Vāsuki as a rope for the production of the nectar of immortality by churning the Ocean of Milk together with the demons. Lord Ajita also told the demigods that upon churning the ocean they should not be afraid of generating the poison known as kālakūṭa. He also told them that they should not be greedy for whatever different attractive products would be obtained from the churning, and if someone else were to take them, they should neither object nor show anger.

The Lord then disappeared after giving these instructions. The demigods went to make a truce with the demon-king, Bali Mahārāja. Thereafter, the demons and the demigods set out to get Mandara Mountain. With great endeavor they lifted the mountain, but since it was extremely heavy it toppled over while they were carrying it. This caused the deaths of many of the demigods and demons crushed under the mountain. Seeing their distressed condition and feeling compassion for them, Lord Ajita, riding on His carrier Garuda, made His most auspicious appearance and revived them by bestowing his nectarean glance. Thereafter, the Lord picked up Mandara Mountain effortlessly in His hand and mounted Garuda. Instructed by the Lord, Garuda arrived at the Ocean of Milk along with the demigods and demons, and left after placing Mandara Mountain near the ocean.

The decision to churn the ocean was made on the condition that whatever nectar would be produced in the churning would be shared by both the demigods and the demons. First of all, the serpent Vāsuki was wrapped around Mandara Mountain as a rope. Due to the expertise of Lord Hari, the intoxicated demons took hold of the hooded end of Vāsuki and the demigods grasped the tail end. With great endeavor, the task of churning began, but after some time the supportless mountain sank into the ocean. All the efforts of the demigods and demons had gone in vain. The Lord saw the sad and frustrated condition of all. On seeing such an obstruction to the churning process, the supremely powerful

Lord Ajita assumed the wonderful form of a tortoise and lifted up Mandara Mountain after entering the ocean. Upon seeing Mandara Mountain being raised up, the demigods and demons began the churning again.

Supreme Lord Śrī Hari held the great mountain on His back, which was like a subcontinent one hundred thousand yojanas wide. While holding up the great mountain that was being rotated by the demigods and demons, the supremely powerful Lord Kūrma felt a pleasurable itching sensation on His back. Thereafter, to increase the enthusiasm of the devas and asuras, the Lord Himself entered into them as their power and into the great serpent Vāsuki as sleep.

The Lord also manifested Himself on the peak of the mountain, spreading thousands of hands like a king of the mountain, holding the mountain with only one hand. As this was taking place, Brahmā, Rudra, Indra and the other demigods praised Him and flowers showered down from the heavens.

In the 1st Canto of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, Matsya-avatāra is mentioned as the tenth avatāra and Kūrma as the eleventh.

*surāsurāṇam udadhiṁ mathnatām mandarācalam dadhre kamaṭha-rūpeṇa
pṛṣṭha ekādaśe vibhuḥ*

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 1.3.16)

“As the eleventh avatāra, Lord Viṣṇu in the form of a tortoise held Mandara Mountain on His back for the demigods and demons who were engaged in churning the ocean.”

*pṛṣṭhe bhrāmyad amanda-mandara-giri-grāvāgra-kaṇḍūyanān nidrāloḥ
kamaṭhākṛter bhagavataḥ śvāsānilāḥ pāntu vaḥ*

*yat-saṁskāra-kalānuvartana-vaśād velā-nibhenāmbhasām yātāyātam
atandritam jala-nidher nādyāpi viśrāmyati*

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 12.13.2)

“May you all be protected by the winds caused by Lord Kūrma’s breathing in His sleepy condition, which was due to the pleasure derived from the scratching of His back by the sharpened stones lying on massive whirling Mandara Mountain. Those inhalations and exhalations are still present in the form of ocean tides that never cease.”

Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Sarasvatī Goswāmī Prabhupāda has written in his explanation of this verse:

“Very high waves are continuously striking against the shores of the ocean of birth, death and the threefold afflictions with great force. There is no cessation of the strokes and counter strokes of the tides. May that Supreme Lord, whose air of inhalation and exhalation creates these powerful strokes and counter strokes of tides, protect the readers. The Vedic scriptures provide the realization of Truth in the hearts of the living beings through the breath of Supreme Lord Kūrma, and thereby remove their ignorance.

The breathing of the Supreme Lord’s descent as Kūrmadeva in the sleepy condition represents the sense gratification (bhoga) and sense detachment (tyāga) of the living beings. But if the breath of that Adhokṣaja Supreme Lord Kūrma bestows mercy, then that breath protects the conditioned souls from sense gratification or sense detachment. May that Supreme Lord Kūrma protect fortunate souls from the grip of non-spiritual cognition with the continuous effect of His eternal spiritual breath. The transcendental itching sensation caused by the scratching of the pieces of stones of Mandara Mountain on the back of Lord Kūrmadeva, made Him sleepy. This bliss of His sleepiness frees the conditioned souls from fear and anxiety. Conditioned souls who consider God to be of stony character are far away from the realization of God’s relationship of worshipped and worshipper (viṣaya and āśraya). May this breathing of the Supreme Personality of Godhead act to pacify the itching sensation of argument within the minds of the conditioned souls. May the appearance of Lord Kūrma and the efficacy of His pastimes blow within the hearts of the conditioned souls like a favourable breeze, and alleviate the itching of their tendency for material enjoyments.”

*puramṛtartham daiteya-dānavaiḥ sah devātaḥ manthānaṁ mandaraṁ kṛtvā
mamantaṁ kṣira sāgaraṁ mathyamāne tada tasmim kūrmarupi janārdanaḥ
vyabhāra mandaraṁ devo devānām hitakāmyayā devāasca tustuvurdevam
nāradāḍya maharṣayaḥ kūrmarūpadharaṁ dṛṣṭvā sākṣiṇaṁ viṣṇumavyayam*

(Kūrma Purāṇa, Pūrva 11.27.29)

“In the past, the demigods and the demons churned the Ocean of Milk using Mandara Mountain as a churning rod to obtain the nectar of immortality. At that time, Lord Janārdana in the form of a tortoise, desiring the welfare of the demigods, held Mandara Mountain on His back. Upon seeing the imperishable Lord Viṣṇu Himself in His avatāra as a tortoise, the demigods, Nārada and other sages became very satisfied.”

The description of the Lord’s appearance as Kūrmadeva in the 8th Canto of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam is the same as was previously discussed. There is an important point to be learned here: whenever the demigods and demons become proud, the Lord destroys their pride. Even after their pride has been destroyed, they become proud again and again. In this way, the intelligence of living beings that are illusioned by the māyā of Lord Viṣṇu becomes bewildered.

Ultimately, the Lord entered into the demigods and demons to give them strength to perform the task of churning the ocean. Therefore, the false pride that “I am the doer” is the cause of great ignorance. This mentality should be given up completely.

*kṣitir iha vipulatare tiṣṭhati tava prṣṭhe dharaṇi-dharaṇa-kiṇa-cakra-gariṣṭhe
keśava dhṛta-kūrma-śarīra jaya jagadīśa hare*

(Śrī Jayadeva’s Daśavatāra-stotra, 2nd Verse)

“O Keśava! Due to holding up the world, a large round sore-like mark has been made in the wide expanse of Your back. O Lord of the universe! O Lord Hari, who have assumed the form of a tortoise! All glories unto You!”

Here, Śrī Jayadeva has used the words ‘kṣiti’ and ‘dharāṇi’ for Mandara Mountain. The earth holds the living entities and Lord Kūrma holds the earth. While worshiping the Supreme Lord, one chants the following mantra of worship for Lord Kūrma before sitting on the āsana (a sacred flat seat on the ground for worship).

*(om) āsana-mantrasya meru-prṣṭha ṛṣiḥ sutalaṃ chandaḥ kūrmo devatā
āsanābhimantraṇe viniyogaḥ*

prṥthvi tvayā dhṛtā lokā devi tvam viṣṇunā dhṛtā

tvam ca dharāya mām nityam pavitraṃ cāsanam kuru

(Hari-bhakti-vilāsa 5.21-22)

“For the āsana-mantra, the ṛṣi (sage) is Meru-prṣṭha, the chandaḥ (meter) is Sutala and the Presiding Deity is Kūrma. ‘O Goddess Earth! You are supporting all living beings. O Devī, you are being supported by Lord Viṣṇu. Therefore, please support me always and purify this āsana.’ ”arāha-avatāra is the third among the ten avatāras. When Brahmājī was ordered to carry out the creation, he began to think about the details involved in the task. At that moment, a male named Svāyambhuva Manu and a female named Śatarūpa manifested from his body. Abiding by the desire of Brahmā, Svāyambhuva Manu accepted Śatarūpa as his wife in order to carry out the process of creation. Seeing the earth submerged in the waters of annihilation and desiring to seek a dwelling place for the living beings, Manu approached his father, Lord Brahmā and prayed to him to rescue the earth. When Brahmājī saw the earth submerged in the water, he thought for a long time about how it could be rescued. He had earlier established

the earth in its normal state after removing all the water, but could not understand why the earth had again sunk into the watery abyss. He had been appointed to do the work of creation but the earth had become inundated in a deluge and had sunk into the depths of the ocean to Rāsatala (the lowest of the seven underworlds). How was the act of creation to be accomplished? How was the earth to be rescued?

Lord Brahmā could not think of a solution even after much thought and effort. At last, he took shelter of the Supreme Lord, Viṣṇu. While Brahmājī was still deep in thought, a small boar the size of a thumb suddenly appeared from his nostril. Astonishingly, as Brahmā looked on, the tiny boar expanded in the sky and within moments had assumed a form as large as a great elephant. Brahmā, great brāhmaṇas such as Marīci, the Four Kumāras (Sanaka, Sananda, Sanātana and Sanat-Kumāra) as well as Svāyambhuva Manu, saw the transcendental Varāha form and began to discuss this wonderful event. Lord Brahmā thought that this must be some resident of the transcendental world travelling in disguise in the form of a boar. “Oh! What a great surprise! How wonderful it is that this expanding Varāha form has come forth from my nostril. Is Śrī Hari, the lord of sacrifice, concealing His original form and trying to agitate me?”

In this way, while Brahmā was deliberating with his associates, Śrī Hari roared tumultuously like the great mountain Girirāja. The omnipresent Śrī Hari enlivened Brahmājī and the other highly elevated brāhmaṇas by again roaring with His uncommon voice. The sound of His roar was so sweet that it would destroy all the miseries of the hearer. Lord Brahmā, Svāyambhuva Manu and other sages who reside in Janaloka, Tapaloka and Satyaloka, chanted auspicious mantras from the Vedas as offerings to Varāhadeva. Upon hearing the prayers of Brahmājī and the other sages, Lord Varāha prepared to enter into the waters of annihilation for the benefit of the demigods. Lord Varāha rose into the sky while slashing His tail. The Lord quivered the hair on His shoulders and scattered the clouds in the sky with His hooves. With raised hairs, white tusks and luminous effulgence, the Lord’s form was brilliantly beautiful. This is a unique and wonderful pastime of Śrī Hari. Just the remembrance of it causes shivering in the body. Despite being omnipotent and omniscient, He searched for the earth planet in the way that an animal would, using the sense of smell. Although His external appearance was fearful, He pleased the sages engaged in offering prayers, by lovingly glancing over them and entering into the water. His dive into the water

with His thunderbolt-like mountainous body divided the ocean. The ocean prayed to the Lord out of fear, “Please protect me, O Supreme Lord!”

The Lord of all sacrifices separated the water with His hooves, and saw the earth lying at the bottom of Rāsatala in the same way as when He had carried her in His stomach during the time of annihilation. Appearing very splendid, Lord Varāha lifted the earth by carrying her on His tusks. At that time, a very powerful demon named Hiranyākṣa challenged the Lord with a mace. Lord Varāha expressed great anger upon seeing the demon. Thereafter, Lord Varāha killed Hiranyākṣa just as a lion kills an elephant and the cheeks and face of the Lord became red with the blood of the demon¹[\[6\]](#). With folded hands, the sages headed by Brahmā offered prayers to the Lord. The Lord, being satisfied with the prayers of the great sages, placed the earth upon the turbulent water with His hooves and then disappeared from their vision. There is a very important point to understand here. Laghu-bhāgavatāmṛta says:

“Lord Varāha appears twice in one day of Lord Brahmā. During the Svāyambhuva-manvantara, He appeared from Brahmā’s nostril and rescued the earth, and during the sixth manvantara (Cakṣuṣa-manvantara) He appeared to rescue the earth and kill Hiranyākṣa.”

According to Laghu-Bhāgavatāmṛta, in the lineage of Uttanapada the son of Praceta was Dakṣa, the daughter of Dakṣa was Diti and the son of Diti was Hiranyākṣa. At the time of the appearance of the original (ādi) Varāhadeva at the beginning of the kalpa, Manu did not have any sons or daughters. How then could Hiranyākṣa have taken birth during the Svāyambhuva-manvantara? Therefore, it is seen that in the Bhāgavatam, Maitreya Rsi described the pastimes of Lord Varāha in both the Svāyambhuva-manvantara and Cakṣuṣamanvantara at the same time. Svāyambhuva Manu and Śatarūpa gave birth to two sons: Priyavrata and Uttanapada, and three daughters: Akutī, Devahutī and Prasutī.

dvītiyaṁ tu bhavāyāsyā rāsatala-gatāṁ mahīm uddhariṣyann upādatta yajñeśaḥ saukaram vapuḥ

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 1.3.7)

“For the welfare of the world, and due to the desire to rescue the earth which had fallen to Rāsatala, the supreme enjoyer of all sacrifices accepted His second manifestation as a boar.”

Here, Lord Varāha is described as the second avatāra:

*yatrodyataḥ kṣiti-taloddharaṇāya bibhrat krauḍīm tanuṁ sakala-yajña-mayīm
anantaḥ antar-mahārṇava upāgatam ādi-daityaṁ taṁ daṁṣṭrayādrim iva vajra-
dharo dadāra*

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 2.7.1)

“The unlimitedly powerful Lord assumed the form of a boar for the rescue of the earth and pierced the first demon Hiranyākṣa, with His tusk.”

jalakridasu ruciraṁ vārāhīm rūpamāsthitaḥ adhr̥ṣyaṁ mānasapyanyair

vangmayam brahmā-samjñitam

*prthivyuddharanarthaya praviśya ca rasātaḥ daṁṣṭrayābhyujjaharai na
matmadharo dharādharah*

*dṛṣṭvā daṁṣṭragravinyastaṁ pṛthvīm prathitā pauraṣaṁ astavan jana-lokastaḥ
siddha brahmaṛṣayo hariṁ*

(Matsya Purāṇa 6.8-10)

“The Supreme Personality of Godhead who is imperceptible to the mind, who plays beautifully in the water and who is the Sound-God designated as Absolute Brahman, appeared as Varāha to save the life-giving earth. He entered into the depths of the ocean and rescued the earth with His tusks. Seeing the earth resting on the tusks of the Lord, the sages of Janaloka offered prayers to the most

celebrated Śrī Hari.”

Here it is said that Lord Nārāyaṇa, the cause of creation and destruction, appeared as Varāha:

vasati daśana-śikhare dharaṇī tava lagnā śaśini kalaṅka-kaleva nimagnā

keśava dhṛta-śūkara-rūpa jaya jagadīśa hare

(Śrī Jayadeva’s Daśāvatāra-stotra, 3rd Verse)

“O Keśava! O Supreme Lord, You have assumed the form of a boar! O Lord! The planet earth rested on Your tusk and it appeared like the moon engraved with spots.”

Brahmā offered prayers to the Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, when He manifested in the womb of Devakī while she was in the prison of Kāṁsa. The following is the last verse of those prayers:

*matsyāśva-kacchapa-nṛsimha-varāha-haṁsarājanya-vipra-vibudheṣu
kṛtāvatāraḥ*

*tvaṁ pāsi naś tri-bhuvanāṁ ca yathādhuneṣa bhāraṁ bhuvo hara yadūttama
vandanāṁ te*

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 10.2.40)

“O Supreme Controller, Your Lordship previously accepted avatāras as Matsya (fish), Aṣṭvagrīva (horse), Kūrma (tortoise), Nṛsimhadeva (half man/half lion), Varāha (boar), Haṁsa (swan), Lord Rāmacandra (the son of Daśaratha), Paraśurāma Vāmanadeva and other forms, to protect us and the three worlds (heaven, earth and underworlds). O Kṛṣṇa, best of the Yadus, we respectfully

offer our obeisances unto You. Now, by Your mercy, please protect us again by diminishing the burden of sins in this world.”

Sri Nrsimha-Avatara

he fourth of the Daśāvatāra is Śrī Nṛsimha-avatāra. Among the innumerable avatāras, twenty-five are pre-eminent as has been stated before in connection with Matsya-avatāra. Of these twenty-five, Śrī Nṛsimhadeva is the fourteenth. He is the vaibhava-vilāsa (expansion in magnificence) of the tadekātmā form of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

The second catur-vyūha (quadruple expansion) of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is comprised of Vāsudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha, and each of these has two further vilāsa expansions. Pradyumna’s expansions are Śrī Nṛsimhadeva and Śrī Janārdana. Besides that, it is also described that in the second catur-vyūha, Vāsudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha are the prābhava-vilāsa (predominating transcendental pastime) expansions of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. There are a total of twenty further expansions of these four prābhava-vilāsa forms. They can be recognized according to the placement of four different symbols in Their hands: conch (śankha), mace (gadā), lotus (padma) and disc (cakra). Regarding Śrī Nṛsimhadeva, these symbols appear in the order of cakra, padma, gadā and śankha (disc in the lower right hand, lotus in the upper right hand, mace in the upper left hand and conch in the lower left hand).

In the Seventh Canto of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, the pastime of Śrī Nṛsimhadeva’s appearance is briefly narrated as follows:

Due to the curse of the four Kumāras (Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanātana and Sanat), Jaya and Vijaya, the doorkeepers of Vaikuṇṭha, took birth as Hiraṇyākṣa and Hiraṇyakaśipu who were the two sons of Diti and Kaśyapa Ṛṣi. Of the two sons, Hiraṇyakaśipu was senior and affectionate to his brother. Lord Śrī Hari, in the

form of Lord Varāha, took the side of the demigods and killed Hiranyākṣa. Desiring to take revenge, Hiranyakaśipu began to consider Lord Viṣṇu as his enemy and developed malicious feelings toward Him. He encouraged the demons to disturb ritualistic ceremonies and kill the brāhmaṇas. He also decided to perform severe austerities for one hundred years to get the benediction of achieving unrivalled supremacy of the three worlds. When Lord Brahmā became pleased by his austerities and appeared before him, Hiranyakaśipu asked for the benediction of becoming immortal. Lord Brahmā explained his inability to give him the boon of immortality, so Hiranyakaśipu asked for the boon of immortality in a different manner by requesting the following conditions: that he not be killed during the day or night, either inside or outside, in the sky or on the ground. He also asked that he not be killed by any weapon or by any living being created by Brahmā. Thus, Hiranyakaśipu became extremely powerful by the boon of Brahmā and enslaved all the Lokapālas (Presiding Deities of the eight directions of the universe). He became the sole monarch of the three worlds and enjoyed worldly pleasures while occupying Mahendra Bhavana, the residence of Indra. The demigods suffered due to his cruel behaviour and took refuge of Śrī Hari. Lord Hari then gave them confidence saying, “When Hiranyakaśipu becomes jealous of his devotee-son Prahlāda, he will be destroyed.”

Hiranyakaśipu had four sons: Saṁhlāda, Anuhlāda, Hlāda and Prahlāda. Of these, Prahlāda was the best due to his virtuous qualities. While in his mother’s womb he had heard and assimilated the teachings of Nārada Muni. As he was always absorbed in meditation on the Supreme Lord, the peaceful and tranquil-hearted Prahlāda could not perceive anything in this world unrelated to God who is all-good.

As it was the custom in those days to send children to the guru’s home for education, Hiranyakaśipu sent Prahlāda who was well versed in ethics, to Ṣaṇḍa and Amarka, the two sons of the demon-guru Śukrācārya. Ṣaṇḍa and Amarka lived near the palace. They began to teach politics to Prahlāda along with the other demon children. After hearing the teachings of his gurus, Prahlāda would always give the expected reply, but in his heart he did not like these teachings. “This is my country, that is another’s country. This is our group, that is another’s group.” Politics is based upon the foundation of this division between ‘mine and thine’. There can be no politics without this ‘mine and thine’ or ‘friend and foe’ mentality. So, this is the demoniac mentality. Here, the noteworthy thing is that although the highly learned Prahlāda understood the futility of the teachings of his teachers, he never behaved in a rude or disrespectful manner but gave

befitting respect to them. If a person respects his parents, teachers, elders, guardians and others senior to himself in age, he is benefited and consistency remains in the social arrangement. Selfishness and disrespect of elders and seniors will bring disorder everywhere. Prahlāda's character is unique and his every conduct is worth following.

When Prahlāda's teachers Ṣaṇḍa and Amarka saw that Prahlāda had attained a good education and was answering all their questions properly, they thought it wise to send him to his father, as he would be glad to see Prahlāda's educational progress. Hiraṇyakaśipu was happy at the return of Prahlāda from his guru's home. He took him on his lap and cordially said, "My dear son Prahlāda, tell me whatever you think to be saintly (sādhū)." By this, Hiraṇyakaśipu meant that he wanted Prahlāda to tell him some good words from whatever he remembered from his guru's teachings that he could express without difficulty, as he was just a child.

Prahlāda understood the intentions of his father, but as the question was put before Prahlāda in the royal assembly, he thought that he ought to speak only the truth, which is actually saintly otherwise the court members would misunderstand him. So he replied, "O emperor of demons, for the corporeal souls who are always perplexed due to the acceptance of perishable things and contact with non-eternal relations, I think it to be saintly to renounce the home which is like a dark well¹[\[7\]](#), the place of downfall, and to go to the forest to take refuge of and worship the lotus feet of Śrī Hari."

Hearing his son's view on the worship of Viṣṇu, Hiraṇyakaśipu smiled and thought that others must have spoiled the vulnerable intelligence of the child. He sternly ordered the demons to be careful in dealing with Prahlāda and to take care lest any Vaiṣṇava should come in disguise and spoil his intelligence. After hearing about this order from Hiraṇyakaśipu, Ṣaṇḍa and Amarka became worried. They knew that they had never taught Prahlāda about Viṣṇu-worship, so he must have heard such things from some Vaiṣṇava and spoken about it. If they tried to find out the name of that Vaiṣṇava and inform the king tactfully about it, the king would not doubt them. With this intention, Ṣaṇḍa and Amarka addressed Prahlāda in a very pleasing manner and said, "O joy of the demon dynasty, we bless you for the sake of your welfare. You should not tell a lie before your teachers. Speak the truth. We have not taught you about devotion to Viṣṇu. We have taught you with other demon children but their minds are not spoiled like yours. Did you speak for yourself in that manner, or has somebody

spoiled your intelligence?” Prahlaḍa understood the intentions of his teachers. So he first offered praṇāmas to the Supreme Lord who controls the māyā potency that covers the intelligence of the living beings and creates the mentality of ‘mine and thine’. Then he said, “As iron is naturally attracted towards a magnet, my heart is similarly attracted towards the lotus feet of Cakrapāṇi Śrī Hari (Śrī Hari, the holder of the disc weapon). Śrī Hari has spoiled my intelligence.”

Prahlaḍa’s reply was not what Ṣaṇḍa and Amarka wished to hear. They thought that Prahlaḍa would mention someone’s name whom they could catch hold of, so they became angry and condemned Prahlaḍa, “O ruiner of the family, defamer of the demon dynasty, you are like a thorn tree in the sandalwood forest which is the asura dynasty. Using you as an axe, Viṣṇu will destroy the sandal forest of the demons; your intelligence is lost. There are four methods of politics, namely sāma (conciliation), dāna (monetary gratification), bheda (causing dissension) and daṇḍa (punishment), and your conscience will not be awakened without using the last method. Someone bring a cane immediately to flog this boy!” Thus, they tried to frighten Prahlaḍa by striking a cane on the table because Prahlaḍa was the son of the emperor, and they lacked the courage to actually beat him. They reproached him hastily but Prahlaḍa remained silent. Again, they began to teach him the scriptures related to dharma, artha and kāma (piety, wealth and the fulfilment of desires), and tried to educate him in politics. After some time, Prahlaḍa’s teachers saw that Prahlaḍa had become expert in the four pillars of politics. He properly replied to every question. This time, they themselves would take him to the king. Thinking in this way, they first took Prahlaḍa to see his mother. Prahlaḍa made obeisances to his mother and she bathed him very affectionately and decorated him with various jewels. Then, Prahlaḍa’s teachers took him to the royal assembly of King Hiraṇyakaśipu, whereupon Prahlaḍa made prostrated obeisances before his father. Seeing Prahlaḍa, Hiraṇyakaśipu felt great affection for him. He took him on his lap, embraced him, kissed him and bathed him with tears of happiness. After this, Hiraṇyakaśipu happily inquired, “O son Prahlaḍa, you have taken instruction from your gurus for so long. Now, please tell me something excellent from their teachings.”

Hiraṇyakaśipu’s intention was that Prahlaḍa should speak on what was best from the teachings of Ṣaṇḍa and Amarka, considering them as gurus. But Prahlaḍa was worried; he thought that if he replied according to his father’s wishes, the others present in the court would get the wrong impression about the teachings of a real guru. Ṣaṇḍa and Amarka were not real gurus (sad-gurus) even though

they were family gurus. A guru²[\[8\]](#) should be śrotriya³[\[9\]](#) (well-versed in the śruti or Vedas) and have brahmaniṣṭha (firm devotion to Brahman or God). Prahlāda's teachers were learned in śruti but lacked firm devotion to Brahman. They were only devoted to their specific mundane subjects or worldly knowledge, so their teaching was not the instruction of proper gurus. Prahlāda decided to speak about the essence of all the lessons he had received from his real guru, Nārada who possessed the two qualities of śrotriya and brahmaniṣṭha, and replied:

“Dedicating oneself to Viṣṇu and following the nine forms of devotion with the only object being the propitiation of Viṣṇu, is the highest form of genuine knowledge.” The nine forms of devotion are respectively: hearing, chanting, remembrance of the name, form, attributes, personal associates and pastimes of the Lord, service of the lotus feet of the Lord (pāda-sevana also indicates service of the devotees of the Lord), worship of the Deity, prayers and obeisances, service of God in the relationship of master and servant, service of God in friendship, and total self-dedication to God.

Upon hearing Prahlāda again speak about the worship of Viṣṇu, Hiraṇyakaśipu thought that he must have learned this from Ṣaṇḍa and Amarka, the sons of his guru, Śukrācārya. So he became very angry and condemned them in a rude manner, “O lowest of brāhmaṇas! O evil minded ones! What did you do? You disobeyed me; you adopted the favor of my enemy and taught my son Prahlāda about worthless Viṣṇu-bhakti. A sinful person commits sin secretly but his sin manifests in the form of disease; similarly, a deceptive and wicked-minded person, although living in the form of a friend, ultimately discloses his real form through his deeds.” At this, the guru's sons said, “O King, you have conquered Indra and all the Lokapālas are afraid of you. We are but poor brāhmaṇas. We would not dare to act against you. We have not taught Prahlāda about devotion to Viṣṇu and neither has anyone else. Prahlāda's devotion to Viṣṇu is natural and inborn, so please restrain your anger.” In Satya-yuga, everyone spoke truthfully, so Hiraṇyakaśipu believed his guru's sons and asked Prahlāda, “O impolite one, O destroyer of the family, how have you become Kṛṣṇa conscious if your gurus did not teach you in this manner?”

Prahlāda replied, “Without the favour of a niṣkiñcana mahā-bhāgavata (a perfect pure devotee, completely emancipated from worldly concerns), a gṛhavrata⁴[\[10\]](#) (a person engaged in household affairs) cannot become devoted to Śrī Kṛṣṇa either by himself or by the help of other gṛhavratas.” In other words, Prahlāda's

devotion to Śrī Kṛṣṇa was not due to his own efforts or the help of the family guru's sons. Rather, his devotion to Śrī Kṛṣṇa was due to the favour of niṣkiñcana maha-bhāgavata Śrī Nārada, the devotee of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Upon hearing this undesirable statement from Prahlaḍa, Hiraṇyakaśipu became blind with rage and threw Prahlaḍa from the throne with such force that any five-yearold child would have died at once, yet the Lord saved him. Prahlaḍa remained patient, steady and peaceful. He did not even raise a finger against his father or use any harsh words. Hiraṇyakaśipu ordered the demons to kill Prahlaḍa. At first, the demons did not wish to kill the king's son, but when Hiraṇyakaśipu repeatedly persuaded them to kill Prahlaḍa by quoting different reasons and maxims, they began to attack the vital parts of Prahlaḍa's body with spears. As Prahlaḍa's mind was fully absorbed in, and devoted to the indescribable Supreme Lord of the universe, all the efforts of the demons proved futile. Seeing this, Hiraṇyakaśipu became even more suspicious and tried to kill Prahlaḍa by various methods such as the celestial powerful elephant of the quarters, by serpents and by evil incantations. He tried to kill Prahlaḍa by hurling him from a mountain, by burying him in a deep ditch, by poisoning him, by starvation, by exposure to severe cold and atmospheric pressure, by burning him in a fire and by stoning him. But when all efforts proved to be in vain, he began to think that the power of the child was immeasurable.

Prahlaḍa was not afraid of anything! Hiraṇyakaśipu began to think that Prahlaḍa was immortal, and worried that he himself might die if he opposed him. Thus, Hiraṇyakaśipu sat down with his head hung low.

Seeing Hiraṇyakaśipu dejected, Ṣaṇḍa and Amarka tried to console him by saying, "O King, you have conquered the three worlds single-handedly and all the Lokapālas are afraid of you. Therefore, you need not worry. Besides, one should not pay attention to the virtues and defects of a mere child."

They suggested to him, "Until guru-Śukrācārya returns, Prahlaḍa should be kept on an island so that he might not run away out of fear. Growing up with the ācārya, serving the ācārya and learning from the ācārya will purify his intelligence." Hiraṇyakaśipu accepted the proposal of both the guru's sons and told them to instruct the boy in the piety and charity suitable for a king. They carefully took Prahlaḍa and the other demon children to an island. There, they began to teach him about dharma, artha and kāma—material religiosity, economic development

and sense gratification. One day, the teachers went to their homes to do some work. When the children came to know about their teacher's departure, they thought it a good chance to play. Prahlāda's school friends called him out to play, but the highly learned Prahlāda told them that he wished to say something to them so they all changed their play-dress and gathered around Prahlāda. Though all the children were of the same age as Prahlāda, they had great respect and affection for him. Prahlāda told the children about the duties of human beings: "The human birth is very rare and valuable because in such a birth one can realize the Supreme Lord. After realizing Him, no material desires will remain. But this golden chance is not permanent because life is momentary. So, wise persons will follow bhāgavata-dharma from their childhood and worship the Lord by hearing and chanting His glories. The thought that 'I will perform devotional practices later on' is not good. If the mind becomes attached to money, wife, son and relatives, then devotion will be difficult. If you do not devote yourself to the Lord's worship now, many difficulties and problems will interfere with prayer later on." Prahlāda discussed all these things in detail, enabling the children to understand. In order to gain their confidence, he related to them everything about how he had received the message of Kṛṣṇa-bhajana from Nārada while in his mother's womb. The demon children heard Prahlāda's teachings, and thinking them to be superior ideas, accepted them, thereby rejecting the teachings of their materialistic gurus.

Due to Prahlāda's influence, the minds of the demon children became fixed on the Supreme Lord. The anxious brāhmaṇas Śaṇḍa and Amarka immediately went to the demon king to explain the situation. Hearing this implacable message, Hiraṇyakaśipu became extremely angry. With harsh words, he condemned the young Prahlāda who was standing politely with folded hands: "O impolite, dull-headed one! You are disobeying my rule. I shall send you to the abode of Yama right now. Even the Lokapālas are afraid of my anger. Why are you not afraid of me? Who has given you this strength?" Prahlāda replied, "Strength only comes from the one Supreme Lord, Śrī Hari. Everyone gets their strength from Him. No one is our enemy except the uncontrolled mind. You should give up these demoniac thoughts of 'friend and foe'. In ancient times foolish persons like you had the false pride that they had conquered the earth, but they could not even conquer the six passions residing in their own bodies. Those who have conquered the mind see no one as their enemy. Only the ignorant believe others to be their enemy." By these words of Prahlāda, Hiraṇyakaśipu became more and more enraged and shouted, "O unintelligent fool! You condemn me and boast about conquering the six inherent cardinal

passions of man. Certainly you want to die! You rascal, there is no Lord in the world other than me. If there

is, then where is He?”

“Father, He is everywhere,” said Prahlaḍa.

“Then why do I not see Him in this pillar?” retorted Hiraṇyakaśipu.

“I see Him even in this pillar,” replied Prahlaḍa.

The very powerful Hiraṇyakaśipu condemned Prahlaḍa with extreme anger and harsh words. “May your Lord save you!” Saying these words, he picked up his sword, rose from his throne and violently struck the pillar with his fist. As the pillar was struck, it emitted a terrible sound as if the whole universe was being shattered. Brahmā and the other demigods were afraid of this unique, terrifying sound and Hiraṇyakaśipu himself began to search out its source. Then, in order to prove correct the words of both his devotee Prahlaḍa and Lord Brahmā, the Supreme Lord appeared in a wonderful half-human and half-lion form called Nṛsiṃha. Even though the Lord appeared before his very eyes, Hiraṇyakaśipu still could not understand Him as the Lord; he saw Him as a strange creature. Without pure devotional eyes, one cannot see the Lord.

The terrible form of Lord Nṛsiṃha is described in the Bhāgavatam as follows: Both His eyes were full of anger and shining like molten gold and His angry face was full of matted hairs and mane. He had terrible teeth, a sharp tongue like a razor’s edge, stretched eyebrows and raised ears, with a mouth and nose like the caves of a mountain. He had terrible divided jaws, His body was touching the sky, His neck was thick and short, His thighs and chest broad and His stomach was thin. His body was covered with white hair and He had hundreds of arms and nails. Even though Hiraṇyakaśipu understood this unique Nṛsiṃha Deity to be the cause of his death, he became ready to fight and struck the body of the Lord with his mace. Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva play-acted the battle for some time and then, neither in the daytime nor at night but at dusk, neither inside the house nor outside but on the threshold, neither in the sky nor on the ground but on His lap and without any weapon but His nails, He tore open Hiraṇyakaśipu’s chest and wore his intestines as a garland. The Lord also killed thousands of other demons with just His nails. After this, Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva exhibited the triumphant behaviour of a conqueror. He left Hiraṇyakaśipu and sat on the throne in the

middle of the royal assembly in His angry form. Witnessing this terrible form of the Lord, no one could gather the courage to approach and serve Him, even though they were all ecstatic due to the demise of the cruel king. Brahmā, Rudra, Indra, the Ṛṣis, Vidyādhara, Nāgas, Manus, Prajāpatis, Gandharvas, Cāraṇas, Yakṣas, Kimpuruṣas, Vaitālikas, Kinnaras, Viṣṇu-pārṣadas and others, all prayed to Lord Nṛsiṃha from a distance.

Although Brahmā prayed to Lakṣmī to go to Śrī Nṛsiṃhadeva to allay His anger, She could not go before this terrible never-before-seen Deity. Then Brahmā asked Prahlāda to go and pacify the anger of Nṛsiṃhadeva. The reason for this was that this terrible and angry form of the Lord had appeared only due to the torture of bhakta Prahlāda. Prahlāda made obeisances to Śrī Lakṣmī, Brahmā and the other demigods. Then he went to Nṛsiṃhadeva and fell down at His lotus feet. Nṛsiṃhadeva, being in the mood of parental affection, put his lotus hand on Prahlāda's forehead so that all of Prahlāda's defects, which were due to having been born in a demon dynasty, were removed. Transcendental knowledge was revealed in his heart and overwhelmed with ecstatic devotion, he began to offer prayers to Śrī Nṛsiṃhadeva .

Satiated by the prayers of Prahlāda, Nṛsiṃhadeva wished to grant a boon to him, but Prahlāda had no desire of taking any boon. The reason is that the person who serves the Lord with the desire for worldly pleasures or for the Lord's blessings to get worldly benefit is not an actual servitor; but a trader. Then Nṛsiṃhadeva said that if He did not give Prahlāda a boon, His designation as Varadarābha, the Supreme Conferrer of boons, would be defamed. So Prahlāda replied, "O Lord, if You wish to grant me a boon, please grant me the boon that there may not be any desire in my heart to ask a boon from You."

Nṛsiṃhadeva replied, "This cannot be accepted as your prayer for a boon because you have deceived Me."

Prahlāda then submitted this prayer to Nṛsiṃhadeva: "My father struck Your holy body with his mace and he behaved maliciously with me because I worship You. Kindly purify him."

Nṛsiṃhadeva said to Prahlāda, "Your father has seen Me and received My touch. Did this not purify him? O Prahlāda, do you think the dynasty in which you have taken birth is still impure? Along with you, twenty-one of your ancestral generations have become purified."

triḥ-saptabhiḥ pitā pūtaḥ pitṛbhiḥ saha te 'nagha

yat sādho 'sya kule jāto bhavān vai kula-pāvanaḥ

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 7.10.18)

“O sinless one, O sādhu, Your father has become pure along with twenty-one forefathers. The reason for this is that having taken birth in their dynasty, you have become the purifier of that dynasty.”

Śrī Nṛsiṃhadeva has two dispositions. He is terrible with non-devotees, but with devotees, He is very affectionate and caring.

The following verse from the Āgamas, is quoted as evidence by Śrīdhara Svāmī in his commentary on Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 7.9.1:

*ugro 'py anugra evāyaṁ sva-bhaktānāṁ nṛ-keśarī keśarīva sva-potānām
anyeṣāṁ ugra-vikramaḥ*

(Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya 8.6)

“Although very ferocious, the lioness is very kind to her cubs. Similarly, although very ferocious to non-devotees like Hiranyakaśipu, Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva is very affectionate and kind to devotees like Prahlāda Mahārāja.” (Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura)

This expresses thoroughly the glories of ŚrīNṛsiṃhadeva’s unique mercy. Devotion to Nṛsiṃhadeva enhances bhakti and destroys uncongenial adverse motivations.

The meaning of the word Hiraṇyakaśipu is—‘hiraṇya’: gold or money, ‘kaśipu’: bed, i.e. desire for money and women. The desire for name and fame also goes together with them. These are obstructions to devotion. Nṛsiṃhadeva destroys the anti-devotional feelings of the Hiraṇyakaśipu-like mentality of the living beings and nourishes the devotional attitude like that of Prahlāda.

So, the favor of Śrī Nṛsiṃhadeva (Nṛsiṃhadeva, the destroyer of hindrances to bhakti) is very necessary for neophyte devotees who have the weakness of non-eternal propensities.

The next two verses, were composed by Śrīdhara Svāmī in his commentary on Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.1.1 and

10.87.1 respectively:

*prahlāda-hṛdayāhlādaṁ bhaktāvidyā-vidāraṇam śarad-indu-ruciṁ vande
pārīndra-vadanam harim*

“Let me offer my obeisances unto the Supreme lionfaced Lord Śrī Hari who is residing within the heart of Prahlāda Mahārāja as condensed bliss, and who always removes nescience. His effulgence is like autumnal moonshine.”

*vāg-īśā yasya vadane lakṣmīr yasya ca vakṣasi yasyāste hṛdaye samvit tam
nṛsiṃham aham bhaje*

“On whose lips Sarasvatī (the goddess of learning) dances, on whose chest Lakṣmīdevī resides in the form of a golden line and whose heart is the abode of grand refulgence of the opulence of Absolute Knowledge. I offer my obeisances unto that very object of worship—Śrī Nṛsiṃhadeva.”

ito nṛsimhaḥ parato nṛsimho yato yato yāmi tato nṛsimhaḥ bahir nṛsimho hṛdaye nṛsimho

nṛsimham ādim śaraṇam prapadye

(Nṛsimha Purāṇa, quoted in Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Antya 16.53)

“Lord Nṛsimha is on this side and Lord Nṛsimha is on that side. Wherever I go, Nṛsimha is there. Nṛsimha is outside and Nṛsimha is also in my heart. I take shelter of that first appearance of Śrī Nṛsimha.”

namas te nara-simhāya prahlādāhlāda-dāyine hiraṇyakaśīpor vakṣaḥśilā-ṭaṅka-nakhālaye

(Nṛsimha Purāṇa, quoted in Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Antya 16.52)

“I offer my respectful obeisances unto Lord Nṛsimha who is the giver of bliss to Prahlāda, and who possesses nails to tear the stone-like chest of Hiraṇyakaśipu.”

tava kara-kamala-vare nakham adbhuta-śṛṅgam dalita-hiraṇyakaśipu-tanu-bhṛṅgam

keśava dhṛta-narahari-rūpa jaya jagadīśa hare

(Śrī Jayadeva’s Daśāvatāra-stotra, 4th Verse)

“O Keśava! O Lord Hari, You have assumed the form of half-man and half-lion! The lotus flower is very soft, but Your most beautiful lotus-like nails are astonishing. The body of the mountain peak-like demon, Hiraṇyakaśipu, has been ripped apart by them because they are also so hard. O Lord of the universe! All glories unto You!”

Regarding this subject, it is written in the Harivaṁśa Purāṇa as follows: In Satya-yuga, Hiranyaśipu, the ancestor of the demons, was engaged in severe penances and demanded the boon from Brahmā that he would not be killed by any demigods, demons, Gandharvas, serpents, Rākṣasas or men. He asked that sages would not be able to curse him, that weapons, mountains, trees, wet or dry things would not be able to destroy him, that he would not die in heaven or on any other planet, either in the daytime or at night. Brahmā granted him these boons saying, “So be it!” By achieving these boons, Hiranyaśipu became very excited. He became the ruler of heaven and began to torture and abuse the demigods in various ways. Unable to bear this torture, the demigods went to take shelter of Lord Viṣṇu, who, giving them assurance of protection said, “I am very soon going to destroy that demon who is proud of his boon, along with all his followers.” Bidding farewell to the demigods, Lord Viṣṇu began to consider how He would kill Hiranyaśipu and went off to the Himalayas. At last, He decided that He would assume the form of Nṛsiṁha who would terrify all the demons (Daityas, Dānavas and Rākṣasas). He then assumed the form of half-man and half-lion. His luster began to rob the sun of its radiance. In this form, Lord Viṣṇu gradually approached the place where the demon king Hiranyaśipu, was sitting in an excellent assembly accompanied by the demigods, Gandharvas and Apsarās (celestial nymphs) who were playing music with perfect rhythm.

Being present in that assembly, the Lord looked at Hiranyaśipu again and again. At that time, Hiranyaśipu’s son Prahlāda saw that Divine Form for a moment with spiritual vision, and addressed the demon king as follows: “O King, you are the chief of the demons. On seeing this Divine Form, it appears as though this is an inexpressible, divine influencing personality. Our demoniac dynasty will be destroyed by it. All immovable and moveable objects seem to exist in the body of this great person. He is some special personality.”

Hearing Prahlāda’s statement, the demon king ordered his demon followers, “Kill this Lion immediately!” The demons attacked the Lion with all their might but they were soon destroyed along with their retinue. Nṛsiṁhadeva then opened His mouth. His terrible roaring appeared like the sound of annihilation, and He easily destroyed the entire demon assembly. Then Hiranyaśipu himself began to shower dreadful weapons on Him. Both began a terrible fight.

The demons attacked Lord Viṣṇu, but they themselves were killed by Him. Ablaze with anger, Hiranyaśipu appeared to burn everything with his bloodshot eyes. The earth began to shiver, the oceans became perturbed and all

the forests and mountains became restless. There was darkness everywhere; nothing was visible. Terrible disturbances took place and fearful winds began to blow. The symptoms of universal annihilation began to appear. Being lusterless and dark, the sun began to emit terrible smoke.

Even the seven suns assumed forms of darkness and rose in the sky. Meteors fell in quick succession from the heavens. Greatly enraged, Hiraṇyakaśipu bit his lips with his teeth and ran to fight, taking his mace in hand. Upon seeing this, all the demigods became frightened. They went to Nṛsiṃhadeva and said, “O Lord, destroy this wicked Hiraṇyakaśipu with his followers. There is no one in this world who can kill him. Therefore, O Lord, kindly kill him for the benefit of the world and establish peace in all the three worlds.”

Hearing the prayer of the demigods, Nṛsiṃhadeva began to make grave sounds. He leapt up and tore out the heart of the demon with his sharp nails and knocked him down on the battleground. When the horrible enemy—the demon king, fell down dead on the ground, all the people of the earth, moon, sun, planets, stars, rivers and mountains—one and all, were pleased. The demigods unitedly began to recite hymns to propitiate Nṛsiṃhadeva. Celestial nymphs began to dance and sing. After the dancing and singing had ended, the Supreme Lord Nārāyaṇa who wears the symbol of Garuḍa on His flag, gave up His form of Nṛsiṃha and assumed His own form. He then stepped onto an eight-wheeled excellently illuminated chariot, and set out for His place on the northern shore of the Ocean of Milk. In this way, Nṛsiṃhadeva destroyed the demon, Hiraṇyakaśipu.

The Glories Of Observing—Sri Narasigha-caturdasi-vrata

*vaiśākhasya caturdaśyām śuklāyām śrī nṛkeśārī jātas tad asyām tatpujotsavam
kurvīta savratam*

(Padma Purāṇa)

“Śrī Nṛsiṃhadeva appeared on the fourteenth lunar day (Caturdaśī-tithi) of the bright fortnight of the month of Vaiśākha. So, on this day, it is proper to worship and celebrate the appearance of Nṛsiṃhadeva by following the rules of fasting and others.”

*prahlāda-kleśa nāśāya yā hi puṇyā caturdaśī pūjayet tatra yatnena hareḥ
prahlādam agrataḥ*

(from the Āgamas)

“It is proper to first worship Prahlāda before worshipping Nṛsiṃha because the holy fourteenth lunar day of the bright fortnight has appeared in order to remove the distress of Prahlāda.”

It is written in the Bṛhan-Nārasimha Purāṇa as follows: Prahlāda Mahārāja desired to know from Śrī Nṛsiṃhadeva how he had developed devotion to His lotus feet. Nṛsiṃhadeva replied, “In ancient times, there lived a brāhmaṇa named Vasu Śarmā in the city of Avanti, who was well-versed in the Vedas. His good wife Suśīlā was famous throughout the three worlds for her virtuous conduct and ideal devotion to her husband. Vasu Śarmā fathered five sons in Suśīlā’s womb. His first four sons were learned persons of good conduct and devoted to their father. But you, the youngest son, became attracted to a prostitute and lost your character. You were then known as Vasudeva. Your virtuous conduct was destroyed in the company of that prostitute. Due to a quarrel with the prostitute, on the Nṛsiṃha-Caturdaśī-tithi both of you stayed awake throughout the night and unknowingly observed a fast. Therefore, both of you obtained the fruits of observing Nṛsiṃha-Caturdaśī vrata. The prostitute enjoyed as an Apsarā in various ways in heaven and then became My favorite. As the son of Hiranyakaśipu, you also took birth as My dear devotee. By observing this fast, Brahmā has obtained the power of creation and Maheśvara has obtained the power of destruction of the three worlds. Other people also achieve all kinds of power and perform observance of this vow to fulfil all their desired objectives.

In his Laghu-bhāgavatāmṛta, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has written about the pre-eminence of the Lord’s appearance as Śrī Nṛsiṃhadeva, quoting the following reference from Śrī Padma Purāṇa:

*nṛsiṃha-rāma-kṛṣṇeṣu śaḍ-guṇyaṁ paripūritam parāvasthās tu te tasya dīpād
utpanna-dīpa-vat*

(Padma Purāṇa)

“Nṛsiṃha, Rāma and Kṛṣṇa possess the pre-eminent presence of the totality of sixty attributes. Just as one lamp lights other lamps and then all lamps follow the same nature, similarly, although Rāma and Nṛsiṃha are manifested forms from the Prime Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, all three hold the supreme position with sixty attributes.”

Sri Vamana-Avatara

he fifth among the Daśāvatāra is Śrī Vāmanaavatāra. There are innumerable līlā-avatāras. Among them are twenty-five chief līlā-avatāras of which Śrī Vāmanadeva is the eighteenth. All the līlāavatāras have been mentioned in the previous description of Matsya-avatāra. Vāsudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha are the original catur-vyūha, or original four expanded forms of Śrī Kṛṣṇa in Dvārakā. They are prābhava-vilāsa (four-handed forms) of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The majestic expansion of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Nārāyaṇa who resides in Vaikuṇṭha, also has His catur-vyūha, which is known as the second manifestation of four expanded forms. Each form of this second catur-vyūha again expands into three forms. Among the first manifestation of expanded forms—Pradyumna, expands into three forms known as Trivikrama, Vāmana and Śrīdhara. Thus, each form of the second catur-vyūha expands into three forms, which totals twelve, and These are the Presiding Deities of the twelve months. The Deity of the month of Āṣāḍha is Śrī Vāmanadeva. Vaiṣṇavas wear holy marks of twelve hari-mandiras (temples of the Lord in the form of markings known as tilaka) on different parts of the upper body. Among them, the hari-mandira on the left side of the abdomen is fixed for the Presiding Deity Vāmanadeva. The catur-vyūha in the superior transcendental spiritual sky and Their twenty vilāsa forms are differentiated by the positions of holding divine weapons in four hands. Śrī Vāmanadeva holds the conch, disk, mace and lotus. It can be seen that Keśava resides in Mathurā; Jagannātha in Nīlācala; Mādhava in Prayāg; Madhusūdana in

Mandāra; Vāsudeva, Padmanābha and Janārdana in Ānandāraṇya; Varadarāja Viṣṇu in Viṣṇu Kānci and Hari in Māyāpura. In a similar manner, Vāmanadeva also has a dwelling place in the universe. One day of Brahmā or one kalpa consists of 14 manvantaras (each manvantara consists of 71 cycles of the four yugas). The 14 manifestations of the Supreme Lord in these 14 manvantaras are known as manvantara-avatāras. Śrī Vāmanadeva is the manvantaraavatāra in Vaivasvata—the seventh manvantara.

In the 8th Canto of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Śrīla Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vedavyāsa Muni has given detailed accounts of Lord Vāmanadeva's pastime of appearance, the capturing of the three planetary systems from Bali Mahārāja (on the pretext of asking for only three steps of land) and the eventual awarding of the Sutala planet to Bali. A short description of these topics is given here.

Describing the reigns of the fourteen Manus (Svāyambhuva, Svārociṣa, Uttama, Tāmasa, Raivata, Cākṣuṣa, Vaivasvata, Sāvarṇi, Dakṣa-sāvarṇi, Brahmā-sāvarṇi, Dharmasāvarṇi, Rudra-sāvarṇi, Deva-sāvarṇi and Indra-sāvarṇi), Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī has mentioned the pastime of Bali and Vāmanadeva, which took place during the reign of Sāvarṇi Manu of the eighth manvantara.

Once, when Bali Mahārāja was the king of the demons, Indra, the king of the demigods, killed Bali Mahārāja and his chief generals in a fight between the demigods and the demons. When Devarāja Indra began killing the demons with the vow of annihilating the entire demon dynasty, grandfather Brahmā came to know about it and sent Nārada Ṛṣi to stop him from such a heinous act. When Nārada Ṛṣi informed Indra about the order of Brahmā to stop killing the demons, only then did he cease.

Śukrācārya, the family priest of the demons, revived Bali Mahārāja and his chief generals and demons by using the art of mṛta-saṁjīvanī. For the benefit of the demons, Śukrācārya advised Bali Mahārāja to arrange for a viśvajītyajña to be performed by brāhmaṇas of the Bhṛgu dynasty. Bali Mahārāja, following the order of his spiritual master, collected offerings for the sacrifice. Śukrācārya and the brāhmaṇa descendants of Bhṛgu performed the sacrifice systematically. Various kinds of weapons including an inexhaustible quiver were produced in the sacrifice. Bali Mahārāja became greatly powerful by the power of mantra and besieged heaven with his army of demons. When the demigods informed Devarāja Indra about this, he came prepared with his army to fight. However, upon seeing the splendor of Bali Mahārāja, he became bewildered. What to

speaking of fighting, Indra did not even have the courage to stand before Bali Mahārāja. Therefore, the worried and frightened Indra approached his spiritual master Bṛhaspati, and inquired about the amazing strength of the demons. “What is the reason behind this extraordinary power of the demons?” he asked. Bṛhaspati, the spiritual master of the demigods replied, “The brāhmaṇa descendants of Bhṛgu who are dear to Śrī Hari, are backing Bali Mahārāja. Bali Mahārāja has become powerful by the yajña performed by them. If you go to fight with him at this time, you will be unable to win. You will certainly be badly defeated. Therefore my advice to all of you is that you give up your kingdom of heaven and hide in space.”

On the advice of Bṛhaspati, Indra and the other demigods left heaven and began to live clandestinely in space. Aditi¹[\[11\]](#), the mother of the demigods, was saddened to see her sons living in this condition without a kingdom. She stopped taking food and water and existed in a depressed state. Because she was constantly sorrowful and indifferent to all the housework, her home lost its beauty. Day by day she became increasingly emaciated. Mother Aditi anxiously began to wait for her husband Kaśyapa Ṛṣi who was engaged in performing austerities. After a long period of time, Kaśyapa Ṛṣi returned home having finished his austerities. Surprised at seeing the house lusterless and his wife weak and pale, he asked Aditi why this was so. Aditi weepingly replied to her husband, “The demons have driven our sons out of the kingdom of heaven. I pray to your lotus feet that you will please take action to expel the demons and return my sons to their kingdom. Until my sons regain the kingdom of heaven, my sorrow will not be alleviated.” Hearing the inappropriate words of his wife, he tried to pacify her by speaking the essence of supreme truth. He said, “The demigods are our friends and the demons are our enemies; this vision of the duality of enemy and friend only occurs to those who are infatuated by the illusory energy (māyā) of the Supreme Lord. Due to forgetfulness of the Supreme Lord, people experience the negation of knowledge (viparīta-buddhi) of their own constitutional position, and consequently all sorts of troubles and difficulties originate. Actually, all are engaged in a mutual interrelationship of love by dint of their relationship with the Supreme Lord. A pure understanding of knowledge does not include any vision of enmity. My advice to you is that you should give up bodily misidentifications along with false relations and worship Hari with full dedication.”

Mother Aditi took to heart the teachings of her husband, which were full of knowledge. Nonetheless, she persistently requested that her sons should regain

the kingdom of heaven. Mother Aditi repeatedly implored that unless her sons returned to their residence in heaven, she would be unable to find peace of mind. It would seem from these words of Mother Aditi that much like a materially entangled jīva illusioned by māyā, she was aggrieved by affection for her sons. But this was not the actual case. In reality, the Lord wanted to appear as the son of Kaśyapa Ṛṣi and Mother Aditi, to bestow His mercy upon them. He was in fact inspiring Mother Aditi and compelling her to speak like this just to fulfil His objective.

Kaśyapa Ṛṣi attentively heard the words of Aditi, and realizing the actual purpose of her requests he said to his wife, “If it is your strong desire that the demigods are to return to their kingdom of heaven, then you will have to perform the Keśava-toṣaṇa vrata (a fast to please Keśava) for twelve days²[\[12\]](#) by drinking only milk. Other than Lord Keśava, no one will be able to fulfil this desire of yours.” As per the instructions of Kaśyapa Ṛṣi, Mother Aditi performed the Keśava-toṣaṇa vrata, subjecting herself to severe austerity while observing proper usage and custom. At the end of the fast, the Lord appeared before Mother Aditi and assured her that He would appear as her son at the proper time under auspicious indications and would fulfil her desire.

As predicted, at an auspicious time the Lord appeared in the heart of Kaśyapa Ṛṣi. Kaśyapa then imparted divine knowledge to Aditi through initiation. The Lord first appeared in the heart of Aditi and then entered into her womb. When Brahmā and other demigods realized that the Supreme Personality of Godhead had appeared, they began to offer prayers to the womb of Aditi. On the twelfth day of the month of Śrāvaṇa, at the very auspicious moment of the Abhijit star, Lord Nārāyaṇa appeared from the womb of Aditi as Śyāmasundara (sweet and dark complexioned) Pītambara (dressed in yellow garments) holding a conch, disc, club, and lotus.

Kaśyapa Ṛṣi and Mother Aditi saw that as soon as the Lord had appeared before them in a four handed form, He miraculously assumed the form of a dwarf (Vāmana), although he was perfectly proportioned. Kaśyapa Ṛṣi and Mother Aditi became filled with great bliss upon seeing the beautiful form of Vāmana, and were completely overwhelmed with affection for their child. All the birth saṁskāras (purificatory rituals) of the child were performed according to the directions of the scriptures. At the sacred thread ceremony of Vāmanadeva, the sun-god himself instructed Him in the Gāyatrī mantra, Bṛhaspati presented Him with the sacred thread, Kaśyapa gave Him a straw belt (a girdle), Mother Earth

gave Him a deerskin to sit on and the moon-god who is the king of the forests, gave Him a brahma-daṇḍa (the rod of a brahmacārī). Mother Aditi gave Him kaupīna-basana (sacred underwear), the Presiding Deity of heaven offered Him an umbrella, Lord Brahmā gave Him a water-pot, the seven sages offered Him kuśā grass, Sarasvatī gave Him a string of rudrākṣa beads, Kuvera gave Him a pot for begging alms, and Bhagavatī, the mother of the universe, gave Him alms.

Bali Mahārāja had begun the performance of a firesacrifice in the field known as Bhṛgukaccha on the bank of the Narmadā River. He was a greatly charitable person. Brāhmaṇas who were desirous of his charity were going to the place where the sacrifice was being held. A new brāhmaṇa will beg alms after the sacred thread ceremony. Following this custom, Vāmanadeva set out for the sacrificial arena of Bali Mahārāja, holding His daṇḍa, waterpot and umbrella to beg alms from him. Vāmanadeva was walking while holding His umbrella. Being small in size, He was completely covered by the umbrella. When the brāhmaṇas saw Him from a distance, they thought that the umbrella was walking by itself, so they were very astonished. Later, they understood that a brāhmaṇa boy of small stature was underneath the umbrella. The brāhmaṇas tried very hard to overtake him, but were unable to do so. Vāmanadeva bewildered all the brāhmaṇas with His māyā and became the first to arrive at the sacrificial arena. The auspicious arrival of Vāmanadeva in His brilliant effulgent form diminished the brilliance of the sacrificial fire. Understanding that a great personality had arrived, Bali Mahārāja, his priests and others present there, rose up from their seats and welcomed the Lord by offering proper respects. Considering Him to be a great brāhmaṇa, Bali Mahārāja offered his obeisances and then sprinkled on his own head the water with which he had washed the Lord's lotus feet. After worshipping Him according to the proper customs, Bali Mahārāja spoke to Lord Vāmanadeva as follows: "You have surely come here to ask me for something. Therefore, whatever You desire, be it wealth or a kingdom, I shall give it to You. If You have the desire to marry, I shall give You a qualified girl as per Your desire."

The dwarf Vāmanadeva replied, "I know the previous members of your very exalted dynasty. You have taken birth in the dynasty of the uncommon warriors Hiraṇyākṣa and Hiraṇyakaśipu. Your grandfather Prahlaḍa was a mahābhāgavata. Just by remembering him, the jīva (living entity) is purified. Your father Virocana, after promising charity to a brāhmaṇa, never failed to fulfil his promise. I know that you also will not refuse to fulfil your promise. I ask you for three steps of land."

Upon hearing this, Bali Mahārāja smilingly said, “You have narrated those great deeds of my ancestors which even I had no knowledge of. However, You have begged for a very insignificant thing. I see that You are a little brāhmaṇa; therefore, Your intelligence is also little. What purpose could be served by obtaining three paces of land, measured by Your small steps? Do you know who I am? I am the owner of the three worlds. By my desire I can give You all of Jambudvīpa (Asia). After accepting alms from me, if You beg alms from anyone else, it will disgrace my name as a great charitable person. Therefore I request You to please reconsider this matter.”

Śrī Vāmanadeva said, “I know that you are the owner of the three worlds and that you can give Me many things. But I am a brāhmaṇa. A brāhmaṇa should be satisfied with little. If brāhmaṇas desire many objects of sense gratification, they lose their spiritual potency. One’s desire for sense gratification never ends. If you give Me Jambudvīpa, I will desire the whole earth. Next I will desire Rasātala, then heaven, and finally the position of Brahmā. There is no end to this. Material things are of no use to the soul. As charity given by you, I shall be satisfied with three paces of land as measured by My steps.”

At that time, Śukrācārya, the spiritual master of the demons, was also nearby. He understood that Lord Viṣṇu had appeared in the form of a dwarf brāhmaṇa to fulfil the motive of the demigods. On the pretext of begging for three steps of land, He would take the three worlds from his disciple Bali, leaving him bereft of his kingdom. Foolishly, Bali Mahārāja, not knowing the real identity of this little dwarf brāhmaṇa, was inclined to fulfil His request.

Śukrācārya, desiring the welfare of his disciple, spoke to Bali Mahārāja, “Bali! You do not know the real identity of this dwarf brāhmaṇa who has come to you. He is the Supreme Lord Himself. To fulfil the motive of the demigods, He has come to beg charity from you. On the pretext of asking for three steps of land, He will take away the three worlds from you. Where will you live then? What will you do? With no wealth, how will you perform your charitable and religious duties? Therefore my instruction to you is that you should not give Him the land.” Hearing these words of his guru, Bali Mahārāja said, “I have given my word to a brāhmaṇa. How can I break my promise? How can I tell a lie? If this dwarf brāhmaṇa is the Supreme Lord Himself, where can I find a better or more qualified candidate for charity? Even if I refuse to give, He will take it by force. Being my guru, why are you creating such obstacles? On the other hand if He is only a dwarf brāhmaṇa, how much land can He take by the measure of His three

steps? I will not be able to abandon the decision that I have made to give in charity now.”

Śukrācārya again tried to convince Bali by saying, “Look Bali, in some special circumstances, one should even tell falsehoods for the protection of dharma and wealth; for example, how much wealth one has. By not keeping this secret, one’s wealth does not remain safe. If one’s wealth is not safe, dharma is not preserved. As soon as you pronounce the words for your promise of charity, this dwarf brāhmaṇa will assume a very large Trivikrama form. He will occupy the sky with His body, and with his two steps He will cover the three worlds. You will then not be able to keep your word. Therefore, you should never give Him the three steps of land. This, again, is my instruction.” Even after instructing him in this way, when he saw that Bali Mahārāja would not renege on his promise, Śukrācārya became filled with rage and cursed Bali to lose his opulence.

Bali Mahārāja held true to his promise even after being cursed by his guru. He began to draw water from the water-pot with the intention of offering charity, but while doing so, he saw that there was no water coming out of the pot due to the spout being blocked. The reason for this was that Śukrācārya had been unable to tolerate the foolishness of his disciple, and out of affection for him had entered into the waterpot, thereby preventing the water from flowing out. Bali Mahārāja then began to clear the blocked spout with the help of a stick from a broom. This destroyed one eye of Śukrācārya. It is said that because of his obstructing service to the Supreme Lord, Śukrācārya became known as ‘Kāṇā Śukra’ (Śukra, blind in one eye). However this incident has not been mentioned in the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.

As Bali Mahārāja recited the words of his promise with water from the water-pot, the dwarf brāhmaṇa assumed an immense Trivikrama form, occupying the sky with His body, and then took over the three worlds with His two steps. The inconceivably powerful Supreme Lord’s lotus feet encroached upon the three worlds and reached Satyaloka. Seeing the Lord’s lotus feet, Brahmā and other demigods became very pleased. They worshipped those lotus feet according to proper custom. Vāmanadeva then asked Bali Mahārāja for one more pace of land. Lord Vāmana warned, “Breaking your promise after giving your word will be an irreligious act.”

Bali Mahārāja replied, “I am bereft of everything but I am not upset about this. However, I am unable to fulfil my promise and, due to this fact, I am sad and in

mental agony. You have acquired everything of mine with Your two steps. There is nothing else of mine remaining to give.” Upon seeing that everything had been lost to Lord Vāmanadeva, the demons became determined to recapture their kingdom. When the demons approached Vāmanadeva to kill Him, a wonderful Nārāyaṇī army emanated from the body of Viṣṇu and began to fight with the demons. Seeing the killing of the demons by the Nārāyaṇī forces, Bali Mahārāja asked them to stop the fight. He said, “Our time is now inauspicious, so the result of the fight will also be inauspicious.” The bird king Garuḍa, understanding the desire of Lord Viṣṇu, bound Bali Mahārāja with the ropes of Varuṇa. When Bali Mahārāja was bound with ropes, a universal cry of distress spread everywhere in the heavens and on earth. Then Vāmanadeva approached Bali Mahārāja and said, “In your dynasty, no one has broken his word after giving it to a brāhmaṇa. You took an oath that you would give Me three steps of land. Why are you not giving Me one more step of land? You are religious, yet you are behaving irreligiously.”

Bali Mahārāja’s wife, Vindhyaśālī, was a pious and devotionally inclined lady. She said to her husband, “You have given Vāmanadeva whatever material possessions you had, but you have not given your very self.” Bali Mahārāja was greatly delighted upon hearing the timely and wise words of his devotionally inclined wife. He directed Vāmanadeva toward his head as a place for the remaining step of land. At that time, a foot emerged from the lotus navel of Vāmanadeva and rested on the head of Bali Mahārāja. Bali Mahārāja achieved the touch of those lotus feet, which is rare even for Brahmā and other demigods. On witnessing the great fortune of Bali Mahārāja, kettledrums sounded in heaven and flowers showered down. Being greatly pleased, Lord Vāmanadeva spoke to Bali Mahārāja, “I am very pleased with you. You have not fallen from your dharma. You did not deviate from the truth in spite of being cursed by your gurudeva. Until now you were the giver and I was the receiver. Now I am the giver and you are the receiver. I shall give you whatever you want.”

Having completely surrendered to the Lord, Bali Mahārāja did not ask Him for his lost wealth like a materialistic person. He prayed, “O Lord Vāmanadeva! May Your soothing lotus feet, which You have placed on my head, always remain there.”

Service of the Lord and self-surrender to His lotus feet never result in loss for anyone. Out of foolishness, the ignorant living entity prays for insignificant things from the Supreme Lord. One can achieve the completely blissful Supreme

Lord by sincere surrender or devotion without ulterior motive. Bali Mahārāja achieved the Supreme Lord by the ātma-nivedana (self-surrender) process of bhakti.

Upon seeing the devotion and great fortune of his grandson, Prahlāda Mahārāja felt very happy and glorious. He had tried very hard to make his son Virocana a devotee, but Virocana had not become so and his propensity for demoniac tendencies caused Prahlāda pain in his heart. There was now no limit to his joy upon seeing his grandson as a devotee. Being pleased with Bali Mahārāja, Vāmanadeva awarded him the Sutala planet, which is supremely blissful like Vaikuṇṭha, and ordered the Sudarśana cakra to protect that abode of a bhakta in every way.

Lord Vāmanadeva, the protector of brāhmaṇa-dharma, saw Śukrācārya, the foremost of the Bhṛgu dynasty brāhmaṇas and guru of the demons, standing hesitantly nearby. He said to Śukrācārya, “Your disciple Bali Mahārāja has undergone many difficulties. Please perform the yajña again for his welfare.” Śukrācārya replied, “My disciple has seen You; he has chanted Your name and glories. Your rare lotus feet have been placed upon his head. Is my disciple still so impure that I have to perform a yajña to bless him?”

*mantratas tantrataś chidraṁ deśa-kālārha-vastutaḥ sarvam karoti nischidram
anusāṅkīrtanaṁ tava*

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 8.23.16)

“There may be discrepancies in pronouncing mantras, observing the regulative principles in serial order and moreover, there may be discrepancies in regard to time, place, person, articles and paraphernalia. But when Your Lordship’s holy name is chanted, everything becomes faultless.”

In the Vāmana Purāṇa written by Śrī Vedavyāsa Muni, the pastimes of Vāmanadeva have been described in the context of a discussion between Lomahaṛṣaṇa Sūta and other sages. Even after the death of Hiraṇyakaśipu, the

demons were in constant control. The demigods were driven from everywhere and the demon kingdom spread all over the three worlds. The demons began performing many rituals and sacrifices. Two demons named Maya and Śambara became very famous. Everywhere, religious duties were performed without difficulty. Four-legged dharma was presiding; however, one leg of adharmā had entered nominally. At that time, Bali was enthroned as the king of the demons and everyone was satisfied because of this. Due to Bali Mahārāja's defeating Devarāja Indra, Lakṣmī Devī became pleased and entered into his body. On Lakṣmī's entering into Bali, all the goddesses became pleased with Bali Mahārāja and he became full of all qualities and achieved immense wealth. Having no place for the demigods, Devarāja Indra went to Mother Aditi on top of Mount Sumeru and informed her of his defeat at the hands of the demons. Understanding that only the thousandheaded (sahasra-śīrṣa) Nārāyaṇa could rescue the demigods from this difficulty, Mother Aditi sent Devarāja Indra along with the demigods to her husband Kaśyapa Ṛṣi. As per their mother's instruction, all the demigods went to the third prajāpati (progenitor), Kaśyapa Ṛṣi, and offered him their obeisances. Kaśyapa Ṛṣi listened to their problems and then sent them to Brahmā in Brahmāloka. Understanding their desire, Brahmā asked them to pray to the creator of the universe, the Supreme Lord, on the northern bank of the Ocean of Milk. He told them, "During your worship of the Supreme Lord, you will hear His infallible words saying that He will accept the prayers of Kaśyapa Ṛṣi and Mother Aditi, and fulfil their desire by appearing as their son."

Being ordered by Lord Brahmā and after crossing oceans, mountains, forests and rivers with great hardship, the demigods reached Kaśyapa Ṛṣi. Along with him they reached the place known as Amṛta (ambrosia or nectar³[\[13\]](#)). Kaśyapa Ṛṣi then engaged in a vow, which lasted for thousands of years. The demigods also followed this severe penance (tapoyoga). The great soul Kaśyapa recited the Vedic paramastava (supreme prayer) for the pleasure of Nārāyaṇa and to fulfil Mother Aditi's desire for a son. Thereafter, Kaśyapa Ṛṣi, along with his wife, went to their āśrama in the forest of Kurukṣetra. Mother Aditi performed severe penances at that place for ten thousand years. Being satisfied by the prayers of Aditi, Supreme Lord Vāsudeva appeared before her. When Lord Vāsudeva told Mother Aditi to ask for a boon, Aditi prayed that her son Indra could regain the kingdom of heaven. The Supreme Lord said, "So be it!" and assured her that He would fulfil her desire by appearing as her son. Thereafter, upon Aditi's becoming pregnant, Śrī Kṛṣṇa appeared in her womb. Due to the entrance of Madhusūdāna into the womb of Aditi, the strength of the demons became

diminished. Bali Mahārāja became powerless as if burnt by fire or cursed by a brāhmaṇa. He inquired about the reason for this from his grandfather, Prahlāda. Prahlāda Mahārāja, after thinking for a while, said to Bali Mahārāja, “Do not consider this sort of incident to be ordinary. It is now necessary to think about counteracting it.” After meditating for some time, Prahlāda Mahārāja realized that the Lord had appeared in the womb of Aditi in the form of Vāmana. It was He who had abducted the splendor of the demons. Bali Mahārāja, now knowing the reason for the loss of his splendor, further inquired from his grandfather, “Who is this Śrī Hari who you say is the cause of our fear? We have hundreds of mighty and powerful daityas (demons). Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa does not have enough power to compare with even one of these.” Prahlāda Mahārāja, the best of the daityas, became angry upon hearing such blasphemous words against Viṣṇu from his grandson, and cursed him that the demons would soon be destroyed. “I do not consider anyone other than Śrī Kṛṣṇa to be the protector of this material world. May I see you in the position of losing your kingdom within a short time.”

Bali Mahārāja, upon hearing these unpleasant words from his grandfather, became filled with remorse and repeatedly and pitiably begged forgiveness for his thoughtless words. Satisfied on seeing his grandson fallen at his lotus feet, Prahlāda Mahārāja said, “Son! I cursed you in anger. My curse will not go in vain. However, you should not be sad about that. Become devoted to Acyuta—He will be your rescuer.”

Ten months later, Lord Govinda was born in the form of a vāmana (dwarf). Everywhere auspiciousness and happiness awakened in the hearts of all living beings. With the advent of Vāmanadeva, Lord Brahmā completed His jātakarma (birth rituals) and other saṁskāras and offered many beautiful prayers to the Lord. Satisfied by these prayers, Vāmanadeva said that He was now repeating to Lord Brahmā the promise that He had first made to Indra and then to Aditi: He would see to it that Indra would be reinstated as the ruling power of the universe.

At the sacred thread ceremony of Vāmanadeva, Brahmā gave Him a kṛṣṇājīn (the skin of a black antelope), Bṛhaspati gave Him the sacred thread, Marīci gave Him a palāśa daṇḍa (the rod of a brahmācārī), Vaśiṣṭha gave Him a water-pot, Aṅgirā gave him a kuśācīra (a piece of cloth made of kuśa grass), Pulaha gave Him a mat to sit on, and Pulastya gave Him two cloths of yellow colour. After being worshipped by the demigods, Vāmanadeva, in matted locks and holding a rod, waterpot and umbrella, set off for the sacrificial arena of Bali Mahārāja. As

Vāmanadeva was walking, the earth became free of miseries and became restless. The great serpent Ananta came from Rasātala and began to help Vāmanadeva. By seeing Lord Vāmanadeva, one's fear of snakes dissipates. Upon seeing the earth in this overexcited state, Bali Mahārāja inquired as to the reason from Śukrācārya. Śukrācārya replied, "The cause of the universe, the eternal Śrī Hari has appeared in the home of Kaśyapa in the form of Vāmana. He will come to your yajña. The earth is becoming restless by the deflection of His feet." Hearing this from Śukrācārya, Bali Mahārāja considered himself to be very fortunate as he would be able to have a glimpse of the Supreme Lord, Vāmanadeva. "The Supreme Lord is making His auspicious arrival. What should my duty be now?" Bali Mahārāja asked Śukrācārya. Śukrācārya replied, "O king of the demons! According to Vedic directions, the demigods are enjoyers of the offerings of yajña, but you have made only the demons enjoyers of those offerings. Lord Śrī Hari, although satisfied as the maintainer, is coming for the fulfilment of the desire of the demigods. Therefore, whatever He desires from you for the welfare of the demigods, you should clearly tell Him that you will not be able to give to Him."

In reply Bali Mahārāja said, "O brāhmaṇa, how will I be able to say this? Even if an ordinary person asks me for something, I am unable to say no to him. If in place of that, Govinda Himself comes to me as a beggar, how will I be able to refuse Him? I can give up my life but I cannot refuse Him. I have heard about the glories of charity from you. You are now expressing a different opinion. You should not obstruct me in the matter of giving in charity." At that time, Vāmanadeva appeared in the sacrificial arena of Bali Mahārāja along with Bṛhaspati and other demigods. Then Bali spoke to his priest Śukracārya, "Lord Śrī Hari Himself has come to our home, so He should ask for whatever He wishes."

When Vāmanadeva entered the sacrificial arena, all the demons became lusterless due to His splendor. However, Vaśiṣṭha, Viśvāmitra, Garga Ṛṣi and other topmost sages became greatly blessed upon seeing Vāmanadeva. Vāmanadeva praised the yajña of Bali Mahārāja, as well as its organizers and priests. They in turn also expressed their gratitude to Vāmanadeva.

With great devotion, Bali Mahārāja worshipped Lord Govinda by washing His feet with water and offering oblations, saying, "O best of men, please ask for whatever You wish, be it gold, jewels, elephants, buffaloes, cloth, ornaments, wives, cows, copper, silver and all other metals or even the whole earth."

Although smiling, Vāmanadeva spoke with a serious expression, “O King, to satisfy the terrible fire of my hunger, all I ask from you is three steps of land. Please give gold or villages to whoever asks for them.”

Bali Mahārāja said, “Your purpose will not be served by three steps of land. Please ask for land measured by thousands of steps.” Even then, Vāmanadeva asked only for three steps of land. Bali Mahārāja then took water in his hand and made a promise to give Vāmanadeva land measured by only three steps. Immediately, Vāmanadeva assumed a gigantic form that was greatly splendid and all-encompassing. All the mighty demons, upon seeing this dazzling form of Viṣṇu, achieved the state which insects assume upon seeing fire. All-powerful Viṣṇu then covered the sky and three worlds in a very short time. Defeating the demons, He awarded rulership of the three worlds to Indra. Thereafter, Lord Viṣṇu gave the Pātāla region below the earth planet, to Bali Mahārāja. Sarveśvara Viṣṇu also told Bali, “After the passing of the Vaivasvata-manvantara and upon the arrival of the Sāvarṇimanvantara, you will become Indra. Now I have given the region controlled by you to Indra. Whatever happens, as per My order, you should stay in the Satalapuri region of Pātāla, which is charming, full of many qualities and beauties, and enjoy the sraka-garland, sandalwood and many other types of earthly pleasures.”

Bali Mahārāja replied, “O Lord, by receiving these items of enjoyment from You, may I not forget You. Please bless me that I may remember You.” In this way, Śrī Hari gave the kingdom of the three worlds to Indra and blessings to Bali Mahārāja and then disappeared.

By hearing this pastime of Bali and Vāmanadeva, those who have lost a kingdom will retrieve it and those who have become separated from their objective will also achieve it. Brāhmaṇas will acquire knowledge of the Absolute Truth. Kṣatriyas will become expert in conquering the earth and vaiśyas will achieve an increase in wealth. Śūdras will attain happiness and good fortune, and anyone who hears this will be delivered from all sins.

Near the end of Vāmana Purāṇa, there is a short description of the binding of Bali along with a description of Bali Mahārāja’s wife, Vindhyāvalī, and their son Bāṇāsura.

chalayasi vikramaṇe balim adbhuta-vāmana pada-nakha-nīra-janita-jana-pāvana

keśava dhṛta-vāmana-rūpa jaya jagadīśa hare

(Śrī Jayadeva’s Daśāvatāra-stotra, 5th Verse)

“O Keśava! You assumed the form of Vāmana to trick the great demon Bali Mahārāja by Your steps, and to purify all living entities by the water that emanated from the nails of Your lotus feet. All glories unto You, Lord of the universe.”

Sri Parasurama-Avatara

Lord Paraśurāma is the sixth avatāra of the Daśāvatāra. Of the twenty-five līlā-avatāras, Bhārgava Paraśurāma is the nineteenth. In the Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 20.246 Anubhāṣya commentary of Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Ṭhākura, Paraśurāma has been enumerated as one of the śaktyāveśā-avatāras (a descent of the Lord’s extraordinary power). Paraśurāma is the manifested form of the power to suppress miscreants. Brahmā, Śiva and other demigods and sages such as Nārada and so on, offered prayers to Śrī Kṛṣṇa after He had entered into the womb of Devakī. In those prayers, Lord Paraśurāma has been referred to as an avatāra of Śrī Kṛṣṇa:

*matsyāśva-kacchapa-nṛsimha-varāha-haṁsarājanya-vipra-vibudheṣu
kṛtāvatāraḥ*

tvaṁ pāsi nas tri-bhuvanāṁ ca yathādhuneśa bhāraṁ bhuvo hara yadūttama

vandanam te

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 10.2.40)

“O Supreme Lord, in Your previous avatāras when You appeared as a fish (Matsya), a horse (Hayagrīva— horse-necked), a tortoise (Kūrma), half man and half lion (Nṛsimhadeva), a boar (Varāha), a swan (Haṁsa), a kṣatriya (Daśarathi Lord Rāmacandra—the son of Daśaratha Mahārāja and also as Paraśurāma) and a brāhmaṇa—a learned sage among the demigods (Vāmanadeva), You protected and maintained us and the three worlds. O Chief of the Yādavas, we respectfully submit our prayer unto You. O Supreme Lord! Please now, while also removing the burdens of this world, kindly maintain us.” (Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura)

rājanyaḥ kṣatriyaḥ-rāmacandra o paraśurāma avatāre ṣoḍaśame

paśyan brahma-druho nṛpān triḥ-sapta-kṛtvaḥ kupito

niḥ-kṣatrām akaron mahīm

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 1.3.20)

“Lord Viṣṇu appeared as Paraśurāma, the sixteenth avatāra, and freed the earth from the kṣatriyas (the courageous valiant class who have the capacity to control the wicked and protect the virtuous) twenty-one times, as He was angry with them because of their rebellion against the brāhmaṇas (the highest class endowed with comprehensive wisdom who give impartial advice to the kṣatriyas to help them rule).”

In response to questions of the sages headed by Śaunaka, Śrīla Sūta Gosvāmī has described the pastimes of twenty-two avatāras of which Paraśurāma is the sixteenth. In Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, 9th Canto, Chapters 15 and 16, Śrī Vedavyāsa Muni has described the pastimes of Paraśurāma as follows:

Lord Brahmā was born from the lotus that sprouted from the navel of

Garbhodakaśāyī Viṣṇu. Brahmā had a son named Atri and Atri's son was Soma (Candra). The son of Candra was Budha. Purūravā was born from Budha and his wife, Ila. Jahnu Muni appeared in the dynasty of Purūravā, otherwise known as the Aila lineage, and Kuśa was then born as a descendant of Jahnu. From Kuśa came Kuśāmbu and from Kuśāmbu, Gādhi was born. Gādhi had a daughter named Satyavatī. A brāhmaṇa sage named Ṛcīka¹[\[14\]](#) desired to marry Gādhi's daughter Satyavatī. However, in dowry, Gādhi demanded one thousand horses with special characteristics. The horses were to shine like the moon and one ear, left or right, was to be black in colour. Ṛcīka Muni brought one thousand such horses from the demigod Varuṇa, gave them to Gādhi and then married Satyavatī.

Once, Satyavatī and her mother both desired sons, and therefore requested Ṛcīka Muni to prepare an oblation (caru—a special preparation of rice, milk and sugar boiled together) for them. Ṛcīka Muni prepared two oblations, one to obtain a brāhmaṇa son from the womb of his wife and another for a kṣatriya son from the womb of Gādhi's wife, and then gave the oblations to them. The sage then went out to bathe. Meanwhile, Satyavatī's mother thought that since a husband naturally has more affection for his wife, the oblation that Ṛcīka had prepared for Satyavatī must be better. So, she asked her daughter for the oblation that had been prepared for her, while Satyavatī took the oblation prepared for her mother. When Ṛcīka Muni returned after bathing and found out what had happened, he said with dissatisfaction, “Satyavatī's son will be a kṣatriya holding a staff signifying the infliction of punishment and Satyavatī's mother's son will be ‘brahma-tattvavid’—a knower of the ontological true nature of Brahman (Viśvāmitra).” Later, upon the humble request of Satyavatī, Ṛcīka Muni said, “All right, instead of your son being born as a kṣatriya, your grandson will be a kṣatriya.” Jamadagni was then born from the womb of Satyavatī. He married Reṇukā, the daughter of Reṇu, and among the sons of Jamadagni, his youngest son became famous as Paraśurāma.

yam āhur vāsudevāṁśaṁ haihayānāṁ kulāntakam triḥ-sapta-kṛtvo ya imāṁ cakre niḥkṣatriyāṁ mahīm

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 9.15.14)

“Learned scholars accept this Paraśurāma as the celebrated avatāra of Vāsudeva

who annihilated the dynasty of Kārttavīrya and killed all the kṣatriyas on earth twentyone times.”

Kārttavīryārjuna, chief of the dynasty of the Haihayas, obtained ample power and opulence by worshipping Dattātreyā and became a mighty king. Such was the unsurpassed power of Kārttavīryārjuna that once while touring to gain victory over the whole world (dig-vijaya), he came across the warrior Rāvaṇa worshipping the demigods on the banks of the Narmadā River. Disturbed by the water turbulence caused by Kārttavīryārjuna, he became enraged and attempted to punish Kārttavīryārjuna. However, he lost the battle in a very dramatic way and ended up tied like a monkey. Later on, Kārttavīryārjuna released Rāvaṇa upon seeing how weak and powerless he was.

One day, Kārttavīryārjuna went out hunting and while wandering, arrived at the āśrama of Jamadagni, the sage of the demigods. Jamadagni Muni received the king respectfully and, with the help of the kāmadhenu (the fabulous cow that grants all wishes), provided the king, his soldiers, ministers and servants, with food and other supplies to their full satisfaction. Upon seeing that the kāmadhenu’s opulence was greater than his, the king desired to possess her. He forcibly took Jamadagni’s cow used for performing agnihotras and set off for his capital, Mahiṣmati, on the banks of the Narmadā River. Jamadagni felt sad on hearing the pitiable cries of the kāmadhenu being kidnapped along with her calf. When Lord Paraśurāma heard this, He became very angry and taking up His bow, attacked Kārttavīryārjuna just as a lion attacks an elephant. As Kārttavīryārjuna was about to enter his capital, Mahiṣmatipura, he saw a furious man with matted locks of hair, wearing a black deerskin, His face shining like the sun and holding a bow and arrows, an axe (paraśu) and other weapons, coming after him with great speed. Being fearful, he sent seventeen akṣauhiṇīs²[\[15\]](#) constituted of many elephants, horses, chariots and infantry soldiers equipped with clubs, arrows and many other weapons, to check Lord Paraśurāma. But Lord Paraśurāma alone killed all the soldiers, elephants and horses.

Lord Paraśurāma sliced the enemy army with strokes of His chopper at the speed of mind. The battlefield became wet with the blood of the soldiers. Upon seeing this, Kārttavīryārjuna came onto the battlefield and with his one thousand arms, simultaneously released five hundred arrows. However, using His bow, Lord Paraśurāma immediately destroyed all the king’s bows and quivers. Seeing his weapons cut to pieces, Kārttavīryārjuna uprooted many trees and hills and began

to fight. Paraśurāma first used His axe to cut off Kārttavīryārjuna's arms and then decapitated him like a mountain peak. When Kārttavīryārjuna's ten thousand sons saw their father killed, they all fled in fear. Lord Paraśurāma brought the cow of agnihotra back and gave her to His father Jamadagni. Upon hearing about the death of Kārttavīryārjuna, Jamadagni sadly spoke to his son as follows:

“O mighty-armed Rāma! You have committed a sin by killing the king who is the embodiment of the demigods. We are brāhmaṇas and because they possess the quality of forgiveness brāhmaṇas are worshipped by everyone. It is only due to this quality of forgiveness that Lord Brahmā, the supreme spiritual master of this universe, has achieved his position. The Supreme Lord is quickly pleased with those who are forgiving. The killing of an emperor is a greater sin than the killing of a brāhmaṇa. You should atone for this sin by surrendering Yourself to Śrī Acyuta, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and by worshipping the holy places.” Accepting His father's order, Lord Paraśurāma travelled to the holy places for one year before returning to the āśrama.

Once, upon the instruction of Jamadagni, his wife Reṇukā went to the Ganges to get some water. There, she saw that Apsarās (celestial women) were sporting with the king of the Gandharvas, Padmamālī (Citraratha). Upon seeing their sporting, fleeting thoughts of desire for his association appeared in her mind. She became bewildered and failed to remember that the time for her husband's fire sacrifice was passing. When she came back to her senses, she realized her mistake. Fearful of the sage's curse, she stood near her husband with folded hands. The great sage understood the adultery in the mind of his wife and ordered his sons to kill her. However, his sons refused to carry out his order. Jamadagni then instructed his youngest son, Paraśurāma, to kill His mother Reṇukā and His brothers who had disobeyed his order. Lord Paraśurāma, knowing the power of His father, thought that if He refused to carry out His father's order He would be cursed, but if He carried out the order, His father would be pleased and would give Him a benediction. He would then be able to bring His mother and brothers back to life with that benediction. Paraśurāma therefore killed His own mother and brothers. When Jamadagni, being very pleased, offered to give Him a benediction, Lord Paraśurāma requested that His mother and brothers be brought back to life and that they would not remember having been killed by Him. His mother and brothers immediately came to life as if awakened from sound sleep. Lord Paraśurāma was fully aware of His father's power of austerity and had therefore decided to kill His family members.

Although the sons of Kārttavīryārjuna ran away to save their lives, they did not forget the killing of their father, and a desire for revenge awakened in them. One day when Paraśurāma was out in the forest with His brothers, the sons of Kārttavīryārjuna took the opportunity to enter into Jamadagni's āśrama. In spite of the pitiful prayers of Reṇukā, they cruelly killed Jamadagni³[\[16\]](#) while he was meditating upon the Supreme Lord, and ran away with his head. Hearing the distressed cry of His mother, Paraśurāma hastily returned to the āśrama and lamented for sometime upon seeing His dead father. Then, entrusting the dead body to His brothers, He decided to put an end to all the kṣatriyas of the world. Lord Paraśurāma went to Mahiṣmati, which was already doomed because of the sinful killing of a brāhmaṇa. Killing the sons of Kārttavīryārjuna, Paraśurāma created a mountain of their heads. With the blood of Kārttavīryārjuna's sons who were hostile to brāhmaṇas, a ghastly river was created. In this way, Lord Paraśurāma freed the earth from the kṣatriya class twenty-one times. In the place known as Samanta-pāñcaka, nine lakes were created with their blood. Paraśurāma joined His father Jamadagni's head to his body and placed it upon kuśā grass. He then worshipped Lord Vāsudeva who is allpervading and identical with the Vedas, by performing sacrifices. Upon completion of the sacrifice, Lord Paraśurāma gave the eastern direction to the hotā (the priest who performs the sacrifice), the south to Lord Brahmā, the west to the adhvaryu (the priest conversant with Yajurveda), the north to the udgātā (reciter of the prayers of the Sāmaveda) and the four corners of Īśāna, agni, naiṛta and vāyu (northeast, southeast, southwest and northwest) to the other priests as an honorarium. He gave the middle portion (madhya-deśa) to Kaśyapa, the place known as Āryavartta to the upadraṣṭā (advisors or preceptors) and the remaining portion of the world to the other participants of the sacrifice.

At the end of the sacrificial performance, Lord Paraśurāma cleansed Himself of all sins in the water of His bath. Standing on the bank of the river Sarasvatī, He appeared like the bright sun in a clear, cloudless sky. Thus Jamadagni, being worshipped by Lord Paraśurāma, regained his own body, and became the prominent Seventh Sage⁴ in the Rṣi-maṇḍala (assembly of sages—the constellation of Ursa Major).

*jāmadagnyo 'pi bhagavān rāmaḥ kamala-locanaḥ āgāminy antare rājan
vartayiṣyati vai br̥hat*

*āste ‘dyapi mahendrādaḥ nyasta-daṇḍaḥ praśānta-dhīḥ upagīyamāna-caritaḥ
siddha-gandharva-cāraṇaiḥ evaṁ bhṛguḥ viśvātmā bhagavān harir īśvaraḥ
avatīrya param bhāram bhuvo ‘han bahuśo nṛpān
(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 9.16.25-27)*

“In the next manvantara, the lotus-eyed Personality of Godhead, Lord Paraśurāma, the son of Jamadagni, will be a propounder of Vedic knowledge and will become one of the Seven Sages.”

Having given up the task of punishing and killing the kṣatriyas, Lord Paraśurāma still lives at Mahendra Mountain in tranquility. The Siddhas, Gandharvas and Cāraṇas—different classes of demigods, always sing of His exalted holy character and activities. In this way, the Supreme Spirit of the universe, Controller Śrī Hari, descended in the Bhṛgu dynasty and freed the earth from the burden of undesirable kings by killing them.

The character and activities of Paraśurāma have been described in the Śānti and Vana Parvas of the Mahābhārata. In the Vana Parva, Ṛcīka is mentioned as the son of Bhṛgu. There, it is written that Bhṛgu gave the oblation to Satyavatī and her mother. Satyavatī’s son, Jamadagni, married King Prasanejita’s daughter Reṇukā. Reṇukā gave birth to five sons of which Lord Paraśurāma was the youngest. The five sons were Rumanvāna, Suṣeṇa, Vasu, Viśvāvasu and the youngest, Paraśurāma. According to another opinion, they were Vasu, Viśvāvasu, Bṛhadbhānu, Bṛhatkanva and Rāma. Lord Paraśurāma satisfied Lord Mahādeva on Gandhamādana Mountain and by his benediction, received a very dazzling paraśu (chopper) weapon. Therefore, His name became Paraśurāma: ‘paśunā kuṭhārākhyasāstreṇa rāmaḥ ramaṇam yasya’.

The sage Vaśiṣṭha’s āśrama was burned by fire produced from the arrow of Kārttavīryārjuna. The sage cursed him that Paraśurāma, the son of Jamadagni, would cut off his one thousand arms. After ridding the world of the kṣatriya race twenty-one times, Paraśurāma then stopped killing kṣatriyas on the prohibition of His grandfather Ṛcīka. Paraśurāma’s other names are Jāmadagnya, Paśūrāma, Paraśurāmaka, Bhārgava, Bhṛgupati and Bhṛgulāpati.

Paraśurāma's character and activities have been described in the Viṣṇu, Matsya and Kālikā Purāṇas as well as Sahyādrīkhaṇḍa. In these scriptures, there are some differences from the above-mentioned description. It is said there that due to the sin of killing His mother, the paraśu became joined to Paraśurāma's hand and He had to go to Kailāśa to perform austerities in order to remove the sin. Due to this He became known as Paraśurāma.

The following pastime of Paraśurāma has been described in the Ādi-kāṇḍa of Rāmāyaṇa:

After breaking Lord Śiva's bow, Lord Rāmacandra was returning to Ayodhyā with His father and absolute counterpart internal potency, Sītā, when He was confronted and challenged by Paraśurāma. He said to Śrī Rāma, "You have broken the Haradhanu (bow of Lord Śiva). Upon hearing this, I have brought another bow. This bow is called Vaiṣṇava-dhanu. This is in no way inferior to Śiva's bow. My grandfather Ṛcika received this bow from Viṣṇu, My father received it from My grandfather and I have received it from My father. If You are able to string this bow then I shall (dvandva yuddha) fight with You."

Lord Rāmacandra held the bow and said, "I can annihilate all opponents with this. Tell Me whether I should destroy all the planets that You have acquired by Your penance or if I should arrest Your movement in the sky?"

Becoming totally powerless and bewildered, Jāmadagnya Paraśurāma said, "I have given the whole earth in charity to Kaśyapa Ṛṣi. Since then, I do not stay on the earth at night. Therefore, please do not stop My movement. You may destroy all the planets acquired by My penance." Śrī Rāmacandra then destroyed all the planets acquired by Paraśurāma. After being worshipped in this way by Lord Rāmacandra, Jāmadagnya set off for Mahendra Mountain.

In the 'Bhakti-ratnākara' book written by Śrī Narahari Chakravartī Ṭhākura, Paraśurāma's residence is mentioned as being in Kāmyakavana (Kāmyavana—one of the twelve forests of Vraja-maṇḍala). It also mentions that Mahāprabhu set His lotus feet at the birthplace of Paraśurāma in Reṇukā village at Agravana, just before His arrival at Gokula (Vrajamaṇḍala), during his travelling from Prayāga.

paraśurāma – sthiti-sthāna karaha darśana ethā simhāsane basilena nārāyaṇa

(Bhakti Ratnākara 5.876)

“Take darśana of Paraśurāma’s holy place of residence.

Here, Nārāyaṇa sat on His throne.”

prayāga haite krame āsi agravane āilena śīghra jamadagnira āśrame

*tāñra bhāryā reṇukā, ‘reṇukā’ nāme grāma yathā janma labhilenā śrī
paraśurāma*

reṇukā haite śīghra ‘rājagrāma’ diyā ei vrikṣatale rahe gokule āsiyā

(Bhakti Ratnākara 5.1793-95)

“Gradually coming to Agravana from Prayāg, Caitanyadeva swiftly arrived at Jamadagni’s āśrama. That village is named after Jamadagni’s wife Reṇukā, and Paraśurāma was born there. From Reṇukā, Caitanyadeva left without delay for Rājagrāma and rested under this tree in Gokula.”

*kṣatriya-rudhira-maye jagad-apagata-pāpaṁ snapayasi payasi śamita-bhava-
tāpam*

keśava dhṛta-bhṛgupati-rūpa jaya jagadīśa hare

(Śrī Jayadeva’s Daśāvatāra-stotra, 6th Verse)

“O Keśava! You have assumed the form of Bhṛgupati (Paraśurāma)! By bathing the earth in rivers of blood from the bodies of the demoniac kṣatriyas You slew, You washed away the sins of the world. O Lord of the universe! O Lord Hari! All glories unto You!”

Sri Ramacandra-Avatara

Lord Śrī Rāmacandra is the seventh avatāra of the Daśāvatāra. Among the twenty-five līlā-avatāras, Lord Rāmacandra is the twentieth avatāra. This has been mentioned in the description of Matsya-avatāra. The second puruṣa-avatāra, Śrī Garbhodakaśāyī Viṣṇu, in the form of Pradyumna, is the original source of Matsya, Kūrma, Rāma, Nṛsimha and other līlā-avatāras. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, in his book Laghu-bhāgavatāmṛta, defines Lord Rāmacandra as the parāvasthā (perfect) form.

*nṛsimha-rāma-kṛṣṇeṣu śaḍ-guṇyaṁ paripūritam parāvasthāś tu te tasya dīpād
utpanna-dīpa-vat*

(Padma Purāṇa)

“Lords Nṛsimha, Rāmacandra and Kṛṣṇa possess sixty transcendental opulences in full. When lighting many lamps from one original lamp, all the lamps possess the same nature and similarly, although Rāma and Nṛsimha are expansions of Svayam Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa, all three of Them possess sixty qualities in full.”

In the pastimes of Lord Rāmacandra, the dignity of moral codes is established. Therefore, Śrī Rāmacandra is known as Maryādā Puruṣottama (the best form of the Supreme Lord in following codes of morality). Śrī Rāma’s pastimes exhibit all rasas up to vātsalya rasa (parental affection). However, due to moral codes having the highest priority in these pastimes, the mood of parental affection has a restricted nature. Mahārāja Daśaratha established these codes, so he was unable to prevent Śrī Rāmacandra from going to the forest. To exemplify these codes, Śrī Rāmacandra accepted exile in the forest to uphold a promise that his father had made. Daśaratha Mahārāja passed away because he was unable to

bear the grief of separation from his son, Rāmacandra. Śrī Rāmacandra vowed to accept only one wife—‘eka patnī vrata dhara’. Therefore, no one else can worship Him as a husband. Kanta-rasa (conjugal mood) is not exhibited in these pastimes. When the sages of Daṇḍakāraṇya desired to have Śrī Rāmacandra as their husband, He told them to achieve conjugal bliss by paying allegiance to the gopīs in His pastimes as Kṛṣṇa. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is Svayam Bhagavān, the Prime Supreme Personality of Godhead, whereas Rāma, Nṛsiṃha and others are His partial manifestations (aṁśa) or the parts of the partial manifestations (kalā).

rāmādi-mūrtiṣu kalā-niyamena tiṣṭhan nānāvatāram akarod bhuvaneṣu kintu

kṛṣṇaḥ svayaṁ samabhavat paramaḥ pumān yo govindam ādi-puruṣaṁ tam ahaṁ bhajāmi

(Brahma-saṁhitā 5.39)

“I worship the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Govinda (Kṛṣṇa) who manifested Himself in different forms such as Rāma and others as His partial manifestations or parts of His partial manifestations.”

ete cāṁśa-kalāḥ puṁsaḥ kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svayam indrāri-vyākulaṁ lokaṁ mṛdayanti yuge yuge

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 1.3.28)

“Previously in every epoch, whatever avatāras are narrated as partial manifestations or parts of partial manifestations, appeared to protect the world from the oppression of demons. But Śrī Kṛṣṇa—Vrajendranandana, the son of Nanda Mahārāja, is Original Bhagavān (Prime Puruṣa) and is even prior to Adi-Puruṣa-Avatāra Mahāviṣṇu.”

In Śrī Viṣṇu-dharmottara, Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, Bharata and Śatrughna are

mentioned as being avatāras of Vāsudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha respectively. In Padma Purāṇa, Śrī Rāmacandra is identified as Nārāyaṇa, Śrī Lakṣmaṇa as Śeṣa, Śrī Bharata as Lord Nārāyaṇa's disc (cakra), and Śrī Śatrughna as His conchshell (śankha).

*niḥkṣatriyām akṛta gām ca triḥ-sapta-kṛtvo rāmastu haihaya-kulāpyaya-
bhārgavāgniḥ*

*so 'bdhiṁ babandha daśa-vaktram ahan sa-laṅkaṁ sītā -patir jayati loka-mala-
ghna-kīrtiḥ*

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 11.4.21)

“In the form of Bhārgava (Paraśurāma), the fiery destroyer of the Haihaya Dynasty rid the earth of the kṣatriya class twenty-one times. That same Lord appeared in the form of Rāma (the husband of Sītā) who is renowned as the purifier of the world and rescuer of the people of the world. He built a bridge across the ocean and destroyed the ten-headed Rāvaṇa along with his kingdom of Laṅkā.”

One can see the significant influence of the holy character of Lord Rāmacandra's pastimes in the life of the Hindu society of India. In the original Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa, it is written as follows:

The sage Vālmīki appeared as the tenth son in the lineage of Prāceta Ṛṣi. One day, while living with his disciple Bhāradvāja Muni, he went to bathe by the bank of the River Tamasā, which was near the Gaṅgā (Ganges). At that place, upon witnessing the killing of a male kraunca (curlew) bird by a vyādha (a killer of birds), and the grief of the female kraunca, the sage became sad of heart and spoke the following poetic verse to the vyādha:

*mā niṣāda pratisthām tvam agamah śāśvatīḥ samāḥ yat kraunca mithunāt ekam
avadhīḥ kāma mohitam*

(Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa, Bāla-kāṇḍa 2.15)

“O vyādhā, you will never be able to achieve success and stability throughout your life since you have killed one of a pair of kraunca birds while it was totally absorbed in lustful affairs.”

Thereafter, the great sage bathed in that holy place and returned to his āśrama. Being stricken with grief, he was still thinking about the verse he had just uttered after spontaneously composing it. Just then, the four-headed Lord Brahmā himself appeared before him and spoke the following words to console the perturbed Vālmīki: “O great sage, it was I who caused you to compose such a verse. Fret no longer over this matter. Instead, you should describe the holy transcendental biography of Śrī Rāmacandra, which was spoken by Devarṣi Nārada.” Vālmīki composed the Rāmāyaṇa only because of this order of Brahmā.

In a Bengali encyclopaedia, a particular incident has been described as traditional hearsay. The story in brief is as follows: He was born from a valmīka (ant-hill), so his name became Vālmīki. When Lord Śrī Rāmacandra visited Vālmīki’s āśrama near Citrakūṭa, Vālmīki glorified the name of Rāma and His birth pastimes before the Lord.

Although Vālmīki was born in the house of a brāhmaṇa, he acquired an abominable violent nature due to the association of a vyādhā. He fathered many children from the womb of a sūdra (low class) woman. He practiced robbery as a means of maintaining them. One day when he attacked some sages, they asked him to give up the practice of robbery. They said that he would have to suffer the consequences of whatever sins he was committing by robbing people. Upon returning home and asking his father, mother, wife and other family members, he found out that they would not share the fruits of his sins. He then asked the sages for a remedy. The sages first advised him to chant the name of Rāma. However, upon not being able to utter the name of Rāma from his mouth, he was instructed to chant Marā (death) instead. Following their instructions, he chanted ‘Marā-Marā’ for thousands of yugas (eons). By chanting ‘Marā-Marā’ (the reversal of ‘Rāma-Rāma’), the name of Rāma was eventually pronounced from his mouth,

and he achieved perfection in chanting the name of Lord Rāma. Because he was sitting in one place while chanting for such a long time, his body had become the home of valmīkas (ants or termites). Therefore, people gave him the name Vālmīki.

In the Bengali Rāmāyaṇa written by Śrī Kṛttivās Ojhā (Upādhyāya), some differences from the above description can be seen. Śrī Cyavana Muni was Vālmīki's father. In his youth, Vālmīki's name was Ratnākara and he maintained his family by robbing. One day he attacked Brahmā and Nārada who then asked Ratnākara who he thought would share in his sins. Ratnākara then returned home and asked his parents and wife if they would share the repercussions of his sinful activities. After asking everyone, he came to know that no one would share his sins. He became repentant and when he inquired as to a remedy for these sins, Brahmā advised him to chant the name of Rāma. Due to excessive sins, his mouth was unable to pronounce the word 'Rāma'. Acting on Brahmā's instructions, he chanted the reversed name of 'Marā-Marā'. By chanting 'Marā-Marā', he was eventually able to chant the holy name, 'Rāma'. Due to performing austerities for a long time, his body became covered with the homes of valmīkas, which was then cleansed with rain by Indra. As the valmīkas had covered him, his name became Vālmīki. He wrote the Rāmāyaṇa on the instruction of Nārada. The Rāmāyaṇa is famous as the original epic of India. During the time of the Rāmāyaṇa, Sanskrit was prevalent as the spoken language in Aryan society. The word 'ārya' (honorable, spiritually cultured) has been used quite often in the Rāmāyaṇa. Special respect for the Rāmāyaṇa has been observed in places as far away as Javadvīpa (Java, Indonesia). Although a large book, the Rāmāyaṇa of Javadvīpa² has no section divisions, but does have chapter divisions. The Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa is of three kinds: Udīcca, Dākṣiṇātya and Gauḍīya. The 'Udīcca' indicates the northwestern Rāmāyaṇa and the Dākṣiṇātya indicates the southern Rāmāyaṇa. There is no significant difference between the text and subject of the Udīcca and Dākṣiṇātya Rāmāyaṇas. However, differences can be seen in the Gauḍīya Rāmāyaṇa. There are twenty-eight commentaries on the Rāmāyaṇa. The Rāmāyaṇa has been written in all the languages of India. Among the Rāmāyaṇas written in Indian languages, the Tamil Rāmāyaṇa of Kambala composed in the 9th century of the Christian era, the Bengali Rāmāyaṇa of Kṛttivās composed in the 15th century and the Hindi Rāmāyaṇa of Tulasidāsa composed in the 17th century are the most famous. In the western countries, the Rāmāyaṇa was apparently first translated into the Italian language.

The Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa has been written in seven kāṇḍas (sections), namely: Ādi-kāṇḍa, Ayodhyā-kāṇḍa, Araṇya-kāṇḍa, Kiṣkindhā-kāṇḍa, Sundara-kāṇḍa, Laṅkā-kāṇḍa and Uttarakāṇḍa. The Rāmāyaṇa is a voluminous scripture.

From the description of Rāmacandra's lineage in the 9th Canto of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, it is understood that Rāmacandra appears in the Solar Dynasty (sūrya-varṇśa). Ikṣvāku, the son of Vaivasvata Manu, is the origin of the Solar Dynasty and his descendents proceed in the following order: Māndhātā from Ikṣvāku, Trīśanku's son Hariścandra, Hariścandra's son Rohita and after that Mahārāja Sagara, Asamañjasa, Aṅśumān, Dilīpa and Bhagīratha. In his lineage came Aśmaka, King Bālīka and other kings. When Paraśurāma was killing the kṣatriyas, King Bālīka was saved from His wrath due to being surrounded by women. Hence, one of his names became 'Nārīkavaca' (shielded by women). Being the mūla (root) of the kṣatriya lineage, he became famous by the name of Mūlaka. In the lineage of Bālīka, the great emperor, King Khaṭvāṅga, took birth. From Khaṭvāṅga, Dīrghabāhu, Raghu, Pṛthu Śravā, Aja and finally Aja's son, Mahārāja Daśaratha, was born.

*khaṭvāṅgād dīrghabāhuś ca raghus tasmāt pṛthu-śravāḥ ajas tato mahā-rājas
tasmād daśaratho 'bhavat*

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 9.10.1)

Due to the prayers of the demigods, the Supreme Lord, Śrī Hari, agreed to become the son of King Daśaratha along with His expansions as Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, Bharata and Śatrughna. According to the description of Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa, Daśaratha, acting upon the advice of Sumantra, arranged for a Putreṣṭi-yajña to be conducted by the powerful sage Ṛṣyaśṛṅga to obtain a son. Subsequently, he begot the Supreme Lord and His expansions as his sons in the previously mentioned four forms. His principal queen, Kauśalyā, became pregnant after eating cāru, an oblation of rice, milk and sugar boiled together, which remained after the yajña. At the auspicious time of Punarvasu-nakṣatra in the fourth Zodiacal sign of Cancer, in the month of Caitra on the ninth day of the waxing moon, Lord Śrī Rāmacandra appeared. Bharata appeared from the womb of Kaikeyī during the Puṣyā-nakṣatra-Mīṇalagna and Lakṣmaṇa and Śatrughna

appeared from the womb of Sumitrā during the Aśleṣa-nakṣatra-Karkaṭa-lagna.

Ahalyā was freed of the curse of becoming a stone, by dint of her encounter with Śrī Rāmacandra. The great sage Gautama was the husband of Ahalyā. Devarāja Indra deceived Ahalyā by assuming the form of Gautama and corrupting her chastity. Displeased with this, Gautama cursed Ahalyā and Indra. Turned to stone by the curse of Gautama, Ahalyā remained without food for many years, surviving only on air. Ahalyā was finally freed from this curse by the touch of the lotus feet of Śrī Rāmacandra, and was then reunited with her husband, Gautama.

In the pastimes of Śrī Rāmacandra, the following of ethical codes is of primary importance. His pastimes strongly evoke the sentiment of compassion. By the mercy of Śrī Rāmacandra, we can be saved from immorality and adharma (unrighteousness). The Supreme Lord, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu Himself, prayed to Rāmacandra in the following way to teach us: ‘rāma rāghava rāma rāghava rāma rāghava rakṣa mām’ (‘rakṣa mām’—rescue me). From the pastimes of Rāmacandra, we learn about the necessity of accepting and serving a spiritual master, devotion to one’s parents and the duties of a brother and a wife. Supreme Lord Śrī Rāmacandra has exhibited the pastime of abandoning the opulence of royal life, which is very difficult to give up, and of abandoning a perfect wife for keeping dharma and ethics intact. He accepted all kinds of suffering, accepted exile in the forest and went without food and sleep. He walked with His soft lotus feet on the forest paths, which were full of thorns. Out of love for His devotees, the Lord bestowed His mercy on the caṇḍāla, Guhaka. As the protector of one who surrenders to Him, the Lord awarded shelter to Vibhīṣaṇa³. Śrī Rāma’s pastimes demonstrate how a henpecked person becomes miserable, and how those who consider someone merely dressed as a sādhu (lacking genuine qualification) to be a real sādhu, become cheated and end up miserable. By annihilating demons such as Rāvaṇa and Kumbhakarna, He destroys the living being’s inner demoniac tendencies. To instruct His subjects and for their pleasure, He underwent suffering by asking for Sītā’s trial by fire and Her banishment to the forest.

Austerities are prohibited for those with evil motives, who are in the mode of dark ignorance, because those austerities only create havoc in the world. To teach this, He killed the śūdra Śambūka while the latter was engaged in performing austerities⁴. He taught all these lessons by setting the example Himself.

In the 9th Canto of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, Śukadeva Gosvāmī covers the main topics by describing the transcendental pastimes of Supreme Lord Śrī Rāmacandra in brief. These topics are described in Śrīmad Bhāgavatam as follows: The pastimes of Lord Śrī Rāmacandra are wonderful,

like those of a playful baby elephant. At Sītā's svayaṁvara (the assembly where Mother Sītā was to choose Her husband), in the midst of all the heroes, He playfully lifted the immensely heavy bow of Lord Śiva (Hara-dhanu), which was brought in by three hundred men. He then bent and strung it and broke it in everyone's presence. After breaking the Hara-dhanu at the svayaṁvara, the Lord gained King Janaka's daughter Sītā who had not been born from the womb, and who was equally as endowed as the Lord with transcendental qualities of form, beauty, age, behaviour, and nature just like Lakṣmi. While returning, He crushed the pride of Paraśurāma who had rid the earth of kṣatriyas twenty-one times.

As described in the Rāmāyaṇa, at the time of Rāma's marriage to Sītā in Mithilā, King Daśaratha came with his other sons, ministers and sages. There, Lakṣmaṇa married Urmilā, the daughter of Śīśadhvaṇa Janaka—the King of Mithilā, and Bharata and Śatrughna married the two daughters of Kuśadhvaṇa—Māṇḍavī and Śrutakīrti. To reveal the condition of persons who are attached to women, Lord Śrī Rāmacandra, in order to fulfil the desire of His wife, ran after a golden deer. This deer was in fact Mārīca who had assumed this form according to the instructions of Rāvaṇa. Taking advantage of the golden opportunity of Śrī Rāmacandra's absence, Rāvaṇa kidnapped Sītā. To exhibit the sorrowful condition of a person who is attached to women, Śrī Rāmacandra wandered in the forest in a pitiable state with His brother Lakṣmaṇa, displaying distress due to separation from His beloved.

In this context, as written in the Caitanya-caritāmṛta of Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī, the example of a devotee of Rāma in South India is to be considered. How was it that Rāvaṇa who was overcast with gloom and arrogance, could kidnap Sītādevī, the absolute counterpart transcendental spiritual energy of the absolute transcendental Supreme Lord Śrī Rāmacandra? Upon seeing this description in the Rāmāyaṇa, a brāhmaṇa devotee of Rāma became filled with grief and gave up eating. Śrīman Mahāprabhu put this question to him: "Considering that the ignorant Rāvaṇa had not even seen the absolute transcendental spiritual entity, Sītādevī, how could he have kidnapped Her? Explaining, Śrīman Mahāprabhu said that Rāvaṇa had only kidnapped the Māyā-Sītā or illusory material form of Sītā, and that the real Sītā had disappeared. The

story of the kidnapping of Māyā-Sītā is described in the Kūrma Purāṇa of Vedavyāsa Muni.

In the pastimes of Rāma, a wonderful quality can be seen in the character of Bharata. When obstructed in the service of the Supreme Lord Śrī Rāmacandra, He even rejected His own mother.

*gurur na sa syāt sva-jano na sa syāt pitā na sa syāj jananī na sā syāt daivaṁ na tat syān na patiś ca sa syān na mocayed yaḥ samupeta-mṛtyum*5

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 5.5.18)

“He who cannot rescue a conditioned soul from the worldly bondage of proximate death by advising the path of devotion to God, is not entitled to be accepted as a real guru, real kinsman, real father (such a man should not endeavor to beget a child), real mother (such a woman should not endeavor to conceive), real demigod (such a demigod should not be eligible for worship) or a real husband (such a man should not marry).”

The Supreme Lord creates all living beings but is satisfied only after creating man. Man has the ability to discriminate between good and bad, eternal and non-eternal, and can worship the Supreme Lord. Human birth is not meant only for eating, sleeping, defending and mating like the beasts, birds, aquatics and other animals. Still, we generally find that most people have little or no inclination to worship God. Evidently, we cannot have quality and quantity at the same time. If we wish to increase quantity, we must sacrifice quality and vice-versa.

After killing Rāvaṇa and upon finishing the period of His forest exile, Śrī Rāmacandra returned to Ayodhyā on the puṣpaka (flower) airplane with Sītādevī, Hanumān, Sugrīva and Lakṣmaṇa. The citizens, Brahmā and the other demigods, were in a state of jubilation. However, Śrī Rāmacandra lamented upon hearing that His brother Bharata was eating barley cooked in the urine of a cow, was covering his body with the bark of trees, was wearing matted locks of hair and lying down on kuśā grass. When Śrī Rāmacandra returned to Ayodhyā, Bharata

took Lord Rāmacandra's wooden shoes upon his head and came out of Nandigrāma accompanied by ministers, priests and citizens singing and playing music. He fell at the lotus feet of Śrī Rāmacandra with his eyes full of tears of love. Bharata exhibited such wonderful character! It is difficult for modern men to even contemplate such an ideal. In the present day situation, the administrative class will not hesitate to perform any heinous work to protect their position. Where there is great attachment to position, there cannot be good administration. We can learn from the ideal examples of character of Śrī Rāmacandra and Bharata, what the proper character for administrators should be.

Upon seeing their beloved King Śrī Rāmacandra after a long period of separation, His subjects showered Him with flower garlands and danced in great ecstasy. At that time, Bharata carried Rāmacandra's wooden shoes, Sugrīva and Vibhīṣaṇa carried a cāmara (a fly-whisk) and an excellent fan, Hanumān carried a white umbrella, Śatrughna carried a bow and quiver, Sītādevī carried a water-pot filled with water from holy places, Aṅgada carried a sword and Jāmbavān carried a golden amulet.

While wandering in Ayodhyā in disguise, Śrī Rāmacandra heard one of His subjects casting aspersions upon the character of Sītādevī. Upon hearing this, the Lord banished Sītādevī even though She was pregnant. What a wonderful ideal and spirit of sacrifice this was to teach His subjects!

*iti lokād bahu-mukhād durārādhyād asaṁvidaḥ patyā bhītena sā tyaktā prāptā
prācetasāśramam*

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 9.11.10)

“Men with a poor fund of knowledge and heinous character speak nonsensically. Fearing such rascals, Lord Rāmacandra abandoned His pregnant wife, Sītādevī. Thus, after being banished by Rāma, Sītādevī went to Vālmīki Muni's āśrama.”

Śrī Rāmacandra even abandoned His brother Lakṣmaṇa who was dearer to Him than His own life, in order to maintain the codes of dharma. The gist of this incident is as follows:

Once, Lord Brahmā sent Kāla, in the form of Tāpas, as a messenger to Śrī Rāmacandra. Before conveying Brahmā's message, the messenger placed the condition before Śrī Rāmacandra that he would tell Him the message if Śrī Rāma promised him that no one would be able to hear his words. If anyone heard or saw their secret conversation, he would be fit to be killed by Śrī Rāma. Śrī Rāmacandra accepted this condition. However, while the secret conversation between the messenger and Śrī Rāmacandra was taking place, Durvāsā Ṛṣi came to see Śrī Rāmacandra. Lakṣmaṇa, who was appointed as the gatekeeper during this secret conversation, became afraid upon seeing the angry form of Durvāsā Ṛṣi and went to Śrī Rāmacandra to ask His permission to allow him inside. To keep His promise, on the instructions of Vaśiṣṭha, Śrī Rāmacandra banished His brother Lakṣmaṇa who was dearer to Him than His own life.

Lakṣmaṇa's demonstration that the elder brother is as respectable as the father, his abandonment of all material comforts for the service of his object of worship, Śrī Rāmacandra, and his service to Him for fourteen years while being in the forest with Him, are all ideal examples. Lakṣmaṇa had not been ordered to go to the forest in exile, yet he went after his elder brother to serve Him. Lakṣmaṇa, with his transcendental powers and the help of Vibhīṣaṇa, was able to obstruct the Nikumbhilā-yajña of Rāvaṇa's son, Meghanāda who had conquered Indra. Lakṣmaṇa then killed Meghnāda. Indrajīt (Meghnāda) obtained the boon that only one who is able to remain without food for fourteen years and who also has full control over the senses, would be able to kill him. Lakṣmaṇa did not take food while living in the forest for fourteen years, and performed the pastime of conquering all his senses. While remaining all the time with Śrī Rāmacandra and Sītādevī and serving Them, He never saw beyond the lotus feet of Sītādevī.

Even Śrī Rāma's internal potency, Sītādevī, although instructed repeatedly by Śrī Rāmacandra not to go with Him to the forest (as this punishment was meant for Him and not for Her or anyone else), left behind all comforts for the service of Her husband. By this action, She defined the duty of a chaste wife and exhibited the ideal of following the husband. Supreme Lord Śrī Rāmacandra was completely fascinated by the pure love of Sītādevī, which surpassed all His expectations, but in order to teach the dharma of a king who is engaged in the welfare of the citizens, and although giving pain to Himself, He asked for the ordeal by fire (Agni-parīkṣā) and declared the injunction of banishment of Sītādevī who is non-different from His own self.

Once, arrangements were being made for an Aśvamedhayajña under the priesthood

of Vāsiṣṭha and other sages. The wife of the person to perform the Aśvamedha yajña has to be initiated in the yajña before the husband. Because of this rule, it was proposed that Śrī Rāmacandra get married again, but Śrī Rāmacandra rejected the proposal and arranged to have a golden Deity of Sītā instead. He was given yajña initiation, along with the golden Deity of Sītā as His wife. What can be a better example of Sītādevī's most excellent chastity and love than this? Yet, to remove the doubts of the citizens, in the Naimiṣa area on the banks of the Gomatī, He invited sages, all the kings, and even Sugrīva along with the Vānaras (monkeys) and Vibhīṣaṇa along with the Rākṣasas (a type of demon). Maḥarṣi Vālmīki was also present in the sacrificial arena with Lava and Kuśa. Upon hearing the Rāmāyaṇa from Lava and Kuśa, which had been composed by Vālmīki, Śrī Rāmacandra understood that they were His sons.

Acting on the order of Vālmīki Muni, Śrī Rāmacandra sent messengers to invite Sītādevī to prove Her chastity before everyone at the sacrificial arena. Sītādevī saw that even after She had been tested two times, everyone's doubt had not been removed. Therefore, She came with the determination that this time She would enter into Rasātala (the lowest of the seven underworlds). So, addressing the earth-goddess, She said, "O Devī, if I do not think of anyone other than Rāghava in My mind then divide into two parts and give Me shelter. If this is true, I worship Rāma with all My senses and do not know anyone other than Rāma. O Devī, divide into two parts and let Me enter."

Everyone was astonished to see a miraculous divine throne come up from the middle of the earth, and as Sītādevī sat on it, it entered into Rasātala. Upon Sītādevī's entering into Rasātala, everyone glorified Her with loud applause. Śrī Rāmacandra, taking support of the yajña-daṇḍa, lowered His face, and cried for a long time in the grief of separation from Sītā.

In the Rāmāyaṇa, Hanumān's dedication to his object of worship is displayed to the utmost, and his devoutness has an ideal place among the servants of Rāma. For the nourishment of Śrīman Mahāprabhu's pastimes, Hanumān appeared as Murāri Gupta. Śrīman Mahāprabhu taught the glories and importance of dedication to one's object of worship, through Murāri Gupta. Śrīman Mahāprabhu explained to Murāri Gupta that worship of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the son of Nanda Mahārāja, is best. Upon hearing this subject from Mahāprabhu, Murāri Gupta promised Him that from now on he would worship Śrī Kṛṣṇa, but even

after giving his word to Mahāprabhu he was not able to keep his promise to the very end. Murāri Gupta then fell at the lotus feet of Mahāprabhu and spoke the following words while crying:

*raghunāthera pāya muñi veciyāchoṇ māthā6 kāḍhite nā pāri māthā, mane pāi
vyathā śrī-raghunātha-caraṇa chāḍāna nā yāya tava ājñā-bhaṅga haya, ki
karoṇ upāya tāte more ei kṛpā kara, dayāmaya tomāra āge mṛtyu ha-uka, yāuka
saṁśaya*

(Caitanya-Caritāmṛta, Madhya 15.149 -151)

“Murāri Gupta said, ‘I have sold my head unto the lotus feet of Raghunātha. I cannot withdraw my head, for that would give me too much pain. It is not possible for me to give up the service of Raghunātha’s lotus feet. At the same time, if I do not do so I shall break Your order. What can I do? You are all-merciful, so kindly grant me the mercy that I may die before You so that all my doubts will be finished.’ In this way, Murāri Gupta appealed to Mahāprabhu.”

While assuring Murāri Gupta, Mahāprabhu praised him, saying:

*ei-mata tomāra niṣṭhā jānibāra tare tomāre āgraha āmi kailuṇ bāre bāre sākṣāt
hanumān tumi śrī-rāma-kiṅkara tumi kene chāḍibe tāṇra caraṇa-kamala*

(Caitanya-Caritāmṛta, Madhya 15.155 -156)

“Just to test your firm faith in your Lord, I requested you again and again to change your worship from Lord Rāmacandra to Lord Kṛṣṇa. In this way, I congratulate Murāri Gupta, saying, ‘Indeed, you are the incarnation of Hanumān. Consequently you are an eternal servant of Lord Rāmacandra. Why should you give up the worship of Lord Rāmacandra and His lotus feet?’ ”

The Supreme Lord, Śrī Rāmacandra, glorifying His servant Hanumān, spoke to Maḥarṣi Agastya as follows: “The strengths of Vāli and Rāvaṇa, although being incomparable, were not equal to that of Hanumān’s. Hanumān is filled with chivalry, valor, patience, intelligence, scriptural knowledge and all other desirable qualities. Hanumān alone accomplished the crossing of the ocean

between southern India and Laṅkā, the bringing of the message of Sītā, the killing of the demons, the subsequent burning of Laṅkā and so on. We do not hear such deeds even of Yama, Indra, Kuvera and others. It is only by the strength of Hanumānji that I achieved victory over Laṅkā, rescued Sītā and saw Lakṣmaṇa come back to life after being hit by an irresistibly powerful javelin.”

The question may be raised that if Hanumān was so powerful, then why did he not kill Vāli during Vāli’s fight with Sugrīva? In reply to this, Agastya Muni narrates the story of Hanumān’s curse:

Hanumān was fathered by Vāyu (the wind-god) and took birth from the womb of Anjanā. After the birth of Hanumān, Anjanā went to the forest to pick some fruits due to distress from hunger. Upon seeing the red sun looking like a Javā Flower (Hibiscus), Hanumān mistook it for a fruit and jumped up to eat it. To protect his son from the sun’s heat, the cool wind (Vāyu) began to blow. Knowing that the approaching child Hanumān would perform a great deed in the future, the sun did not burn him. That day, Rāhu⁴ (the truncated demon) went to devour the sun but upon seeing Rāhu, Hanumān went to eat him also. Being afraid, Rāhu ran to Indra and told him that when he went to devour the sun, another Rāhu had attacked him. Indra, while following on his elephant Airāvata, assured Rāhu and sent him ahead as they approached the sun. Hanumān again saw the returning Rāhu as a fruit. Seeing Hanumān coming to catch him, Rāhu cried out loudly. Mistaking Airāvata for a big fruit, Hanumān went to catch him also. Seeing no other way to stop him, Indra attacked Hanumān with his vajra (thunderbolt) weapon. Hanumān’s left hanu (jaw) was broken and he fell down on a mountain. Upon seeing the unfortunate condition of his baby son, Vāyu entered into a cave with him. At the disappearance of air (Vāyu), all the living beings stopped breathing and evacuating, and dried up like wood. The demigods and demons approached Brahmā to save their lives. Brahmā saw the golden-complexioned child in the lap of Vāyu and touched him with compassion and affection. When Hanumān regained his life, Vāyu (air) started flowing again with satisfaction. Brahmā told the demigods that this child would someday perform some great work, so they should bless him. Then Indra blessed the child with the following words: “Hanumān will never be killed even if hit by the vajra weapon. His jaw was broken by the vajra, therefore his name will be Hanumān.” Sūrya (the sun) gave a one-hundredth part of his splendor to Hanumān and also gave him the benediction that he would be a great speaker, very learned in the scriptures. Varuṇa, Yama, Kuvera and others also gave benedictions to Hanumān. Brahmā assured Vāyu by saying that Hanumān would bestow

fearlessness to friends, fear to enemies, would be undefeatable, would be able to travel with unparalleled speed and would perform great deeds.

Becoming powerful by all these blessings, Hanumān began to create mischief in the āśramas of sages due to his childish playfulness. In order to control him, the sages cursed him that he would not be aware of his own power for a long time. He would come to know of his power only if someone told him about it. Thereafter, Hanumān became quiet and wandered peacefully. Hanumānji's influence is seen strongly in northern and western India. In these regions, almost all the followers of sanātana-dharma install and worship the Deity of Hanumān. They especially recite the glories of Hanumān from the Rāmāyaṇa of Tulasidāsa.

In the 11th Canto of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, the description of the avatāra for Kali-yuga has been disclosed in the context of yuga-avatāras. In that description, Vedavyāsa Muni has sung the glories of Kali-yuga's avatārī, Śrīman Mahāprabhuji, in two verses. Both of these verses can also be understood in relation to Śrī Rāmacandra:

dhyeyaṁ sadā paribhava-ghnam abhīṣṭa-dohaṁ tīrthāspadaṁ śiva-virīñci-nutaṁ śaraṇyam bhr̥tyārti-haṁ praṇata-pāla bhavāb̐dhi-potaṁ vande mahā-puruṣa te caraṇāravindam

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 11.5.33)

“O Mahāpuruṣa, protector of all who offer respects unto You, You are always meditated upon, You are the destroyer of the embarrassing conditions of material life, the provider of all that is desirable and the abode of all holy places. You are worshipped by Lord Śiva and Lord Virīñci (Brahmā), You are the shelter, the remover of Your servants' distress and the deliverer from the ocean of material existence. I offer my obeisances unto Your lotus feet.”

tyaktvā su-dustyaja-surepsita-rājya-lakṣmīm dharmiṣṭha ārya-vacasā yad agād aranyam m̐yā-mṛgaṁ dayitayepsitam anvadhāvad vande mahā-puruṣa te caraṇāravindam

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 11.5.34)

“O Mahāpuruṣa, the best of all those who are followers of dharma, You gave up Lakṣmī and the opulence of royal life, which are desired even by the demigods. You went to the forest to honor the word of the ārya and ran after the illusory deer to fulfil the desire of Your beloved. I offer my obeisances unto Your lotus feet.”

*vitarsi dikṣu raṇe dik-pati-kamanīyaṁ daśa-mukha-mauli-balim ramaṇīyam
keśava dhṛta-rāma-śarīra jaya jagadīśa hare*

(Śrī Jayadeva’s Daśavatāra-stotra 7th Verse)

“O Keśava! In the form of Rāma you cut off the ten heads of Rāvaṇa and made delightful gifts of them to the lords of the ten directions. O Lord of the universe! All glories unto You, manifested in the form of Rāma!”

NOTES:

1 na sādhu-vādo muni-kopa-bharjitā nṛpendra-putrā iti sattva-dhāmani
kathaṁ tamo roṣamayāṁ vibhāvyate jagat-pavitrātmani khe rajo bhuvaḥ

“It is not true that sixty thousand sons of Sagar were destroyed by the curse of Kapila Muni. Rather, they wrongly blamed Kapila Muni for concealing the horse and were therefore destroyed by the weight of their own offence committed against Him.”

2 In February 1998, Śrī Bhakti Ballabh Tīrtha Mahārāja travelled to Bali, Indonesia as per the desire of devotees there. He was astounded to see huge statues of Bhīma and Arjuna on the roadside. Even the name of the national

airline of Indonesia is ‘Garuḍa’. A person attending a spiritual discourse introduced himself to Tīrtha Mahārāja by saying that he was actually a Muslim but nonetheless liked to hear Ramayana. These are clear evidences of previous Indian (Vedic) culture.

3 sakṛd eva prapanno yas tavāsmīti ca yācate abhayaṁ sarvadā tasmai
dadāmy etad vrataṁ mama

(Rāmāyaṇa, Yuddha-kāṇḍa 18.33)

“When Vibhīṣaṇa approached Śrī Rāmacandra, the Lord said, ‘This is My vow: If anyone seriously surrenders to Me and even once says, “I am Yours” and asks for My protection, I always give him protection.’ ”

4 Hatāri sugatidāyakah—one who is killed by the Supreme Lord who is
allgood, will certainly attain eternal peace.

5 Bali Mahārāja gave up the order of his guru Śukrācarya; Vibhīṣaṇa gave up
his brother Rāvaṇa; Prahlāda gave up his father Hiraṇyakaśipu; Bharata gave up
his mother Kaikeyī; King Khaṭvāṅga gave up the demigods and the wives of the
yājñik brāhmaṇas gave up their husbands upon seeing their aversion to the
Supreme Lord.

6 śrī nāthe jānakī nāthe abhede paramātmāni tathāpi mama sarvasvaṁ
rāmaḥ kamala-locana

Hanumān’s assertion:

“Although ontologically the master of Lakṣmi, the master of Radhikā and the master of Sītā are identical, lotus-eyed Rāma is my only object of worship.”

For those who are unaquainted with the stories of Rāmāyaṇa, the following are brief summaries of the seven kāṇḍas:

Ādikāṇḍa

Nārada describes the pastimes of Lord Rāma; Vālmīki composes the Rāmāyaṇa; Lava and Kuśa sing the Rāmāyaṇa; Daśaratha’s bringing of R̥ṣyaśṛṅga; Lord Nārāyaṇa accepts the son-hood of Daśaratha; the birth of Vāli, Sugrīva, Hanumān and other Vānaras (monkeys); the birth of Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, Bharata and Śatrughna; Sage Viśvāmitra arrives in Ayodhyā to take Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa to slay the Rākṣasas (demons); Daśaratha refuses to let Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa go with Viśvāmitra at first but later agrees; the narration of the births of Tāḍakā and Mārīca; the slaying of Tāḍakā by Rāma; a description of the lineage of Kuśa; Viśvāmitra’s narration of the origin of Gaṅgā; King Sagara gets sixty-thousand sons; Sagara’s dynasty is destroyed by the curse¹ of Kapila Muni; Bhagīratha gets a boon from Brahmā; Gaṅgā goes to Pātāla (the netherworld); deliverance of the sons of Sagara; Indra cuts to pieces a foetus in the womb of Diti; a description of the curse of Ahalyā and Indra; the redemption of Ahalyā from her curse; Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa travel to the sacrificial arena of King Janaka; Viśvāmitra arrives at the āśrama of Vaśiṣṭha; Viśvāmitra steals the Śabalā cow; Viśvāmitra is defeated doing battle with Vaśiṣṭha; Viśvāmitra performs austerities and attains the status of a brāhmaṇa; King Janaka obtains the Hara-dhanu (bow of Lord Śiva); Rāmacandra breaks the Hara-dhanu and accepts Sītā as His wife; the marriage of Rāmacandra and others; Paraśurāma’s pride is destroyed; Daśaratha arrives in Ayodhyā with his daughters-in-law; Bharata journeys to his maternal home.

Ayodhyākāṇḍa

Daśaratha decides to install Śrī Rāmacandra as the crown prince; Vaśiṣṭha visits Rāma and Daśaratha; the discussion between Kaikeyī and Mantharā; Kaikeyī

requests the boon of the exile of Rāma and the boon of the appointment of Bharata as crown prince; Daśaratha laments; Rāma decides to go to the forest to honour His father's promise; Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa depart for the forest with Rāma; Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā accept garments made of tree-bark; the further lamentation of Daśaratha; Rāma meets Guhaka, the king of the Niṣādas (low-caste hunters); Guhaka's unprecedented devotion for Rāma; Rāma goes to Citrakūṭa and to Vālmīki; Daśaratha laments again upon hearing the message of Rāma from Sumantra; the lamentation of Kauśalyā; Daśaratha narrates the description of the killing of Ṛṣi Kumāra; the death of Daśaratha; a messenger is sent to bring Bharata; Bharata laments upon hearing about the death of his father; Bharata refuses to accept the kingdom; Bharata arrives at Citrakūṭa with his army; Śrī Rāmacandra laments on hearing of the death of His father; Jābālī gives instructions on dharma to Rāma; Bharata returns with Rāma's wooden shoes, hands over the kingdom to his guru and departs for Nandīgrāma; the story of Rāma and Kulapati in Citrakūṭa; the āśrama of Atri Muni.

Aranyakāṇḍa

Śrī Rāmacandra enters the Daṇḍaka forest; the slaying of the Rākṣasa, Virādha; Sūtīkṣṇa Muni narrates the story of Ilvalvātāpi to Rāma and chants the glories of Agastya Muni; Śrī Rāma's introduction to Jaṭāyu; Rāma resides in the forest of Pañcavaṭī; Lakṣmaṇa cuts off the nose of Śūrpaṇakhā; the killing of the fourteen thousand Rākṣasas sent by Khara; the slaying of the three Rākṣasas Dūṣaṇa, Triśira and Khara; Rāvaṇa becomes angry upon hearing about the deaths of Khara and Dūṣaṇa, Rāvaṇa goes to the āśrama of Mārīca and plots to kidnap Sītā; Rāvaṇa decides to kidnap Sītā on Śūrpaṇakhā's advice, even after restraint from Mārīca; Mārīca assumes the form of a golden deer and departs for the Daṇḍaka forest; Rāma leaves to kill Mārīca in the form of a deer; Lakṣmaṇa goes after Rāma upon being rebuked rudely by Sītā; Rāvaṇa abducts Sītā; the fight between Jaṭāyu and Rāvaṇa; Sītā drops jewelry from Rāvaṇa's chariot; Rāvaṇa leaves Sītā in the Aśoka grove and goes to his inner palace; Rāma laments on the disappearance of Sītā; the hearing of the story of Sītā from the dying Jaṭāyu; the performance of the funeral ceremony of Jaṭāyu; Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa cut off the arms of Kabandha; Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa go to Pampā-sarovara and meet Śabarī; the discussion with Lakṣmaṇa about going to Ṛṣyamūka mountain.

Kiṣkindhā-kāṇḍa

Hanumān in the dress of a mendicant meets with Rāma; Hanumān seats Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa on his back and takes Them to Sugrīva; Sugrīva vows to rescue Sītā and Rāma vows to kill Vālī; Rāma pierces the seven Tāla (palmyra) trees; Sugrīva is defeated in his first fight with Vālī; the second time, Vālī falls down after being pierced by the arrow of Rāma; Vālī hands Aṅgada over to Sugrīva and leaves his body; Tārā laments; Sugrīva's coronation and Rāma's lament due to separation from Sītā; Sugrīva worries upon seeing Lakṣmaṇa's fury; messengers are sent in all directions to search for Sītā; Rāma gives His ring to Hanumān as an emblem; the Vānaras return without discovering the whereabouts of Sītā; influenced by the mystic power of Maya Dānava, Hanumān and other Vānaras enter a cave and meet with a tapasvini (female ascetic); Hanumān and others are delivered from the cave; Aṅgada and others decide to fast unto death upon not obtaining any information about Sītā; Sampāti informs them about Sītā; the Vānaras depart for the seashore; the show of power of the Vānaras; Jambuvana (the very powerful king of bears) narrates the birth pastimes of Hanumān; Hanumān increases his size.

Sundara-kāṇḍa

Hanumān leaps from the top of Mahendra Mountain; the killing of Simhikā; Hanumān's fight with Laṅkinī who had assumed the form of a Rākṣasī; Hanumān enters the inner palace of Rāvaṇa, and searches for Sītā in the Aśoka grove; Hanumān grieves upon seeing the miserable condition of Sītā; a description of the birth of the Rākṣasī Trijaṭā; Hanumān's meeting with Sītā; Hanumān destroys the pleasure grove; Hanumān's intense fight with the Rākṣasas; Hanumān kills Jambumāli, Virupākṣa, Akṣaya Kumāra and other principal Rākṣasas; Indrajīt captures Hanumān and brings him to the court of King Rāvaṇa; Rāvaṇa orders Hanumān to be put to death; Vibhīṣaṇa gives his advice to Rāvaṇa; Rāvaṇa orders the burning of Hanumān's tail; the burning of Laṅkā by Hanumān; Hanumān's second meeting with Sītā; Hanumān returns to Mahendra Mountain; the Vānaras destroy Madhuvana in a mood of joy after hearing the news of Sītā; Hanumān gives Sītā's emblem to Rāmacandra.

Laṅkā-kāṇḍa

Rāmacandra weeps upon hearing of the lamentations of Sītā from Hanumān; Rāma instructs Sugrīva to build a bridge; Vibhīṣaṇa tries to give good advice to Rāvaṇa; Rāvaṇa speaks proud words; Vibhīṣaṇa leaves Rāvaṇa and goes to Rāma; Rāvaṇa sends his spy Śuka to the camp of the Vānara army; Rāma constructs a bridge; Śuka is freed and goes to the court of Rāvaṇa; Rāvaṇa again sends a spy, Cara; Sītā laments upon being shown the illusory head of Rāma by Rāvaṇa; talks between Sītā and Saramā; Mālyavan (a Rākṣasa) gives good advice to Rāvaṇa; Rāmacandra views Laṅkā from Subela Mountain; Rāma surrounds Laṅkā with His army; the battle begins; Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa are bound by Indrajīt; the Vānara soldiers become depressed; Rāmacandra laments upon seeing the sad plight of Lakṣmaṇa; Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa are freed from the nāga-pāśa (snake noose) of Indrajīt; Rāvaṇa enters the battle after Dhumrākṣa, Vajradanṣṭra, Akampana and Prahasta perish; Kumbhakarṇa's sleep is interrupted after Rāvaṇa's defeat; Kumbhakarṇa chastises Rāvaṇa; Kumbhakarṇa enters the battle; Sugrīva cuts off Kumbhakarṇa's nose as he is entering into Laṅkā with him; Kumbhakarṇa again sets off for battle; Rāma kills Kumbhakarṇa; the killing of Narāntaka, Devāntaka, Mahodara, Triśira and other giant Rākṣasas; Indrajīt enters the battle and wins; Hanumān brings the mountain of herbs; the Vānaras burn Laṅkā; the killing of Nikumbha, Makarākṣa and other Rākṣasas; Indrajīt kills the illusory Sītā; Indrajīt enters Laṅkāpuri for the Nikumbhilā yajña; Rāma laments upon hearing of the death of Sītā from Hanumān; Lakṣmaṇa kills Indrajīt; Rāvaṇa laments; Rāvaṇa hits Lakṣmaṇa with an irresistibly powerful javelin; Hanumān brings Gandhamādana Mountain; the treatment of Lakṣmaṇa; the intense battle between Rāma and Rāvaṇa; Rāma kills Rāvaṇa with the brahmāstra weapon; the lamentation of Mandodarī; the coronation of Vibhīṣaṇa; Sītā hears the message of victory from Hanumān; Sītā's ordeal by fire; Śrī Rāmacandra accepts Sītādevī; Rāmacandra's conversation with Daśaratha who is brought back by Mahādeva; the Vānara army is revived by the nectar of immortality from Devarāja Indra; Rāmacandra leaves for Ayodhyā on the puṣpaka airplane; the reunion with Bhāradvāja, Guhaka and others.

Uttara-kāṇḍa

The coronation of Śrī Rāma; the birth of Kuvera and his taking up residence in Laṅkā; a description of the birth of the Rākṣasas by Agastya Muni; the demigods go to Mahādeva; following the order of Mahādeva, the demigods go to Viṣṇu; the Rākṣasas journey to Suraloka for battle; Mālya Vānara flees to Pātāla after being defeated by Sumālī; Sumālī's daughter goes to Viśvaśravā and Rāvaṇa and others take birth from her womb; Rāvaṇa and others perform austerities; Rāvaṇa conquers Laṅkā and becomes king; the birth of Indrajīt; Rāvaṇa goes to fight with Kuvera; Kuvera's defeat; Vedavatī curses Rāvaṇa; Rāvaṇa fights with Yama on the advice of Nārada; Rāvaṇa goes to Vāli; Rāvaṇa conquers the planet of the sun-god; friendship with Mandhātā; Rāvaṇa sees Kapila in Pātāla; Rāvaṇa enters Laṅkā and orders Śūrpaṇakhā, who was burning from the fire of the grief of separation from her husband, to go to the Daṇḍaka forest; friendship with the Madhu demon; Indrajīt enters Laṅkā taking Indra with him; Indra gets free and the story of Ahilyā; a description of the fight between Kārttavīryārjuna and Rāvaṇa; the friendship of Rāvaṇa with Vāli; a description of Hanumān's birth; a description of the births of Vāli and Sugrīva; Rāvaṇa goes to Śvetadvīpa; the Vānaras and Rākṣasas return to their respective places; a description of the wanderings of Sītā and Rāma in the Aśoka forest; upon hearing rumors about Sītā, Rāma orders Lakṣmaṇa to banish Sītā; Lakṣmaṇa leaves Sītā in the area of Vālmīki's āśrama; Lakṣmaṇa returns to Rāma; Rāma tells Lakṣmaṇa about Nimi and Vaśiṣṭha; the episode of Yayāti; Śrī Rāmacandra orders Śatrughna to kill Lavaṇa; the birth of Lava and Kuśa in the āśrama of Vālmīki; the episode of Māndhātā; Śatrughna kills Lavaṇa and establishes the capital of Mathurā; Rāma cuts off the head of the śudra, Śambūka, because he is performing austerities; a description of the killing of Vṛtra and the Aśvamedha-yajña of Indra; Rāma goes to Naimiṣāraṇya; Vālmīki comes to the yajña of Rāma with his disciples and Lava and Kuśa sing the Rāmāyaṇa; Sītā comes to the court of Rāma and enters into Pātāla; Kauśalyā and others leave their bodies; the coronation of Aṅgada and Candraketu; Kāla comes to Rāma in the form of Tāpas; Durvāsā arrives; Rāma banishes Lakṣmaṇa; the coronation of Lava and Kuśa; Śrī Rāmacandra enters into the Sarayu with the Vānaras, Rākṣasas and other citizens; the glories of the singing of Rāmāyaṇa.

Sri Baladeva-Avatara

Srī Baladeva Prabhu is the eighth avatāra of the Daśāvatāra. In his commentary on Śrī Caitanya-Caritāmṛta, Madhyalīlā 20.245, Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda has written on the topic of twenty-five līlā-avatāras. Among them, Balarāma, the slayer of the demon Pralambā, is the twenty-second līlā-avatāra.

People who practice other religious faiths often consider the followers of sanātana-dharma to be polytheists, mistakenly believing that they worship many gods. But the truth is that this misunderstanding arises due to their inability to understand the purport of the esoteric principles of sanātana-dharma. The followers of sanātana-dharma have never claimed that there are many supreme lords. The Supreme Lord is infinite and complete. As such, He can never be two, three, four or a thousand. To consider something to be outside of the Infinite would imply the loss of the infinity of the Infinite and completeness of the Complete. Therefore the Complete and Infinite Power Almighty can be only one in number—‘ekamevādvitīyam’.

The all-powerful Supreme Lord possesses infinite opulences. There may be many small gods dependent upon the Supreme Lord, but the Supreme Lord Himself is never many—He is one. The wise should very carefully consider whether or not persons who have the capacity to observe the manifestations of the various opulences of the Supreme Lord (the spiritual energy, marginal energy, material energy and other energies), should be considered to be more advanced and competent than those who cannot. In a rudimentary sense, the whole earth is constituted of ‘dirt’ and one could say that this statement constitutes knowledge of some kind. However, those who are able to analyse and acutely observe this ‘dirt’ perceive definable characteristics and qualities and are therefore thought of as ‘scientists’.

Similarly, ‘spiritual scientists’ can perceive the infinite opulences of the Supreme Lord. This type of perception is the king of all knowledge. It should not be misconstrued that such persons are polytheists or that they promote the concept of many simultaneous supreme beings. The Supreme Lord, although being one, can perform pastimes or spiritual activities in an infinite variety of forms. If someone should say that He cannot do so, then it will be meaningless to call Him the ‘Supreme Lord’ or the ‘All-Powerful One’. The Supreme Lord, although being one, exhibits differences according to His pastimes. He is known as Viṣṇu, ‘ya idaṁ viśvaṁ vyāpnoti iti viṣṇu’. Viṣṇu is the complete substance. Demigods and demigoddesses, being expansions of His energies, are His subordinates and are not Viṣṇu. There is no duality in Viṣṇutattva. However, there are differences

in pastimes. The king in the court and the king in the harem are not two different kings. He can be seen at two places in two different manifestations. In his court he displays his majestic nature and in his chambers he displays his intimate nature. Similarly, the Supreme Lord performs infinite pastimes in infinite forms. He is Śrī Nārāyaṇa in His majestic aspect, Śrī Rāmacandra in His ethical aspect, Śrī Kṛṣṇa in His sweet amorous aspect, and Gaurasundara Śrī Hari in His most munificent aspect. The mood of repulsiveness (bībhatsa-rasa) has been manifested in Lord Matsya. Fearsomeness (bhayānaka-rasa) and parental affection (vātsalya-rasa) have been manifested in Lord Nṛsimha. Therefore, Matsya and other avatāras display differences in pastimes. All twelve rasas (five main and seven secondary mellows or moods) are manifested in their complete form only in Śrī Nandanandana Kṛṣṇa. So, even though all the manifestations of the Supreme Being are one, the excellence of rasa is only fully realised in the original form of Nandanandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

*siddhānta tastvabhede 'pi śrīśa kṛṣṇa svarūpayoḥ rasenotkṛṣyate kṛṣṇa
rūpameṣā rasasthitiḥ*

(Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu 2.32)

“In principle, there is no difference between the forms of Kṛṣṇa and Nārāyaṇa. Still, owing to the superior nature of śṛṅgāra or mādhyura rasa (conjugal mellows), Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s form exhibits excellence. Such is the orderly foundation of rasa.”

Śrī Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vedavyāsa Muni has mentioned twenty-two avatāras in the 3rd Chapter of the 1st Canto of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam. There, he writes as follows:

*ekonaviṁśe viṁśatime vṛṣṇiṣu prāpya janmanī rāma-kṛṣṇāv iti bhuvo bhagavān
aharad bharam*

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 1.3.23)

“In the nineteenth and twentieth avatāras, the Lord removed the burden of the world by His advent in the two forms of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa in the Yadu Dynasty.”

In this context, after giving careful consideration to the innumerable avatāras, and ultimately to serve as a proclamation of the exalted pre-eminence of Kṛṣṇa, it is stated as follows:

*ete cāmśa-kalāḥ puṁsaḥ kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svayam indrāri-vyākulaṁ lokam
mṛdayanti yuge yuge*

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 1.3.28)

“All of the above-mentioned avatāras are either plenary portions¹[\[17\]](#) (amśa) or portions of the plenary portions (kalā) of the Lord. All of Them appear millennium after millennium to protect the planets from disturbances created by the demons. But They are not equal to Kṛṣṇa as He is the Supreme Lord Himself.”

Here, the idea of portions and portions of the portions has been put forth due to the sequential manifestation of rasas. Nandanandana Kṛṣṇa manifests all rasas so therefore He is ‘svayaṁ bhagavān’ or the Primeval Lord, the source of all avatāras and amśa-avatāras.

*yāñra bhagavattā haite anyera bhagavattā ‘svayaṁ-bhagavān’-śabdera tāhātei
sattā*

(Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi 2.88)

“Only the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the source of all other Divinities, is eligible to be designated ‘svayaṁ bhagavān’—the Original Supreme Lord.”

Here, Śrīla Kavirāja Gosvāmī has expressed the difference between anuvāda (subject) and vidheya (predicate). That which is known is called anuvāda and that which is unknown is called vidheya:

taiche inha avatāra saba haila jñāta kāra avatāra?—ei vastu avijñāta

‘ete’-śabde avatārera āge anuvāda ‘puruṣera amśa’ pāche vidheya-saṁvāda

taiche kṛṣṇa avatāra-bhitare haila jñāta tāñhāra viśeṣa-jñāna sei avijñāta

ataeva ‘kṛṣṇa’-śabda āge anuvāda ‘svayaṁ-bhagavattā’ piche vidheya-saṁvāda

(Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi 2.79-82)

“In the same way, all these avatāras were known, but whose avatāras They were was unknown. First the word ‘ete’ (‘these’) establishes the subject (the avatāras). Then ‘plenary portions of the puruṣa-avatāras’ follows as the predicate. In the same way, when Kṛṣṇa was first counted among the avatāras, specific knowledge about Him was still unknown. Therefore, first the word ‘kṛṣṇa’ appears as the subject, followed by the predicate, describing Him as the Original Personality of Godhead.”

Supreme Godhead (the Prime Cause of all causes) Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s first expansion, Śrī Baladeva—the original Saṅkarṣaṇa (Mūla-Saṅkarṣaṇa), has the form of a cowherd boy in Vraja and that of a kṣatriya in Puri (Dvārakāpuri). Saṅkarṣaṇa of the first catur-vyūha (quadruple expansion) in Dvārakā is an amśa-avatāra of Mūla-Saṅkarṣaṇa (cowherd Baladeva). Saṅkarṣaṇa, who is in the second catur-

vyūha of Nārāyaṇa in Vaikuṇṭha, is Mahā-Saṅkarṣaṇa—an aṁśa-avatāra of MūlaSaṅkarṣaṇa in the form of a kṣatriya belonging to the first catur-vyūha in Dvārakā. Kāraṇodakaśāyī Mahā-Viṣṇu, the first puruṣa-avatāra, is the aṁśa-avatāra of Mahā-Saṅkarṣaṇa and the Supersoul of Māyā-Prakṛti²[\[18\]](#). Kāraṇodakaśāyī MahāViṣṇu’s expansion as Garbhodakaśāyī Viṣṇu—the second puruṣa-avatāra (Pradyumna), enters into all the universes.

Garbhodakaśāyī Viṣṇu’s expanded form is the third puruṣa-avatāra—Śrī Kṣīrodakaśāyī Viṣṇu in the form of Aniruddha who is the indwelling Supersoul of the individual universes, as well as the individual living beings. It is Śrī Kṣīrodakaśāyī Viṣṇu, who, upon being prayed to by the demigods, appears millennium after millennium to annihilate the miscreants, to deliver the pious and to re-establish the principles of religion. Śrī Kṣīrodakaśāyī Viṣṇu’s expanded form (aṁśa-avatāra) is Śeṣa—Anantadeva. In his explanation of Nityānanda-tattva, Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī has explained Śrī Baladeva-tattva in this way. Śrī Baladeva is nondifferent from Nityānanda-tattva:

*saṅkarṣaṇaḥ kāraṇa-toya-śāyī garbhoda-śāyī ca payobdhi-śāyī śeṣaś ca
yasyāṁśa-kalāḥ sa nityā-*

nandākhya-rāmaḥ śaraṇaṁ mamāstu

(Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Adi 1.7 & 5.7)

“May Śrī Nityānanda Rāma be the object of my constant remembrance. Saṅkarṣaṇa, Śeṣa-Nāga, Kāraṇodakaśāyī Viṣṇu, Garbhodakaśāyī Viṣṇu and Kṣīrodakaśāyī Viṣṇu are His plenary portions and the portions of His plenary portions.”

In his explanation of Śrī Govinda-tattva, Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Prabhupāda identifies Śrī Baladeva as the vaibhava-rūpa (pastime form) of Lord Govinda. ‘Gāḥ vindati iti govindaḥ’—the word ‘go’ has several meanings including knowledge, senses, earth, cow and others. Śrī Govinda manifests in five forms:

1. svarūpa or svayaṁ-rūpa: the original form.
2. para-svarūpa: the Nārāyaṇa form.
3. vaibhava-rūpa: the pastime form.
4. antaryāmī-rūpa: the Indwelling Supersoul.
5. arcā-rūpa: the Deity form.

The svarūpa or svayaṁ-rūpa, Vrajendranandana Govinda is the Cause of all causes.

īśvaraḥ paramaḥ kṛṣṇaḥ sac-cid-ānanda-vigrahaḥ anādir ādir govindaḥ sarva-kāraṇa-kāraṇam

(Brahma-saṁhitā 5.1)

The para-svarūpa or para-tattva-svarūpa is understood to be Śrī Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa, the Lord of the paravyoma (the transcendental spiritual sky) and Vaikuṇṭha.

Śrī Baladeva Prabhu, the original Nārāyaṇa, is the vaibhava-prakāśa of Govinda. He is the original cause of all emanations. The propagating prime cause of individuality or the all-pervading function-holder of the Personal Godhead is also Baladeva—He is svayaṁ-prakāśa. Śrī Baladeva's color is white, different from that of Kṛṣṇa. He carries a buffalo horn, which produces a louder sound than the flute of Kṛṣṇa. Therefore He is known as Śiṅgādhṛk (horn-holder). Śrī Baladeva possesses qualities like Kṛṣṇa. He is the fountainhead or prime source of the all-embracing, all-pervading and all-extending energy. The actual meaning of these definitions cannot be understood completely by using limited mundane terminology. Vibhu and Prabhu are interdependent. The one who is manifested as vaibhava-prakāśa is Vibhu (the opulent manifested form), and the Divinity

from whom He is manifested is Prabhu. There exists inconceivable non-distinction and distinction between Vibhu and Prabhu. Prabhu is Vāsudeva and Vibhu is Saṅkarṣaṇa. Vibhu and Prabhu’s oneness aspect—the third manifestation, is Pradyumna. Similarly, Their fourth manifestation is in the form of Aniruddha. These four constitute the original caturvyūha in Dvārakā and are the origin of all other catur-vyūhas. Their second manifestation is the second catur-vyūha in the paravyoma or Vaikuṇṭha. They are also pure and turīya (transcendental) like the original catur-vyūha. Baladeva, who is Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s vilāsa form, is the Original Saṅkarṣaṇa. In the paravyoma or spiritual sky, Mahā-Saṅkarṣaṇa is the svarūpa-aṁśa—Balarāma’s own aṁśa-avatāra. He is the source of the first puruṣa-avatāra, Kāraṇārṇavaśāyī Mahā-Viṣṇu. He (Baladeva or His manifestation, Kāraṇārṇavaśāyī Mahā-Viṣṇu) is the cause of Rāma, Nṛsiṃha and other avatāras, as well as Goloka and Vaikuṇṭha, and is also the cause of the cosmos. All of the above-mentioned five forms of Viṣṇu are of the same nature. Any number of lamps can be lit from the original lamp, and they will all be capable of burning all things. Similarly, the original lamp is svayaṁ-rūpa Śrī Kṛṣṇa and there is no difference in tattva (essence) ontologically between the second, third, fourth and fifth Viṣṇu Deity or between one form and another of Viṣṇu. There is only difference in the characteristics of Their pastimes. (The explanation of ‘Śrī Govinda’—The compilation of lectures of Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Prabhupāda: 2nd Vol.)

Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī, while introducing the avatāras of avatārī (the fountainhead of avatāras) Śrī Kṛṣṇa, writes in the 20th Chapter of the Madhya-līlā of Śrī Caitanyacaritāmṛta as follows: Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s three different forms are:

1. svayaṁ-rūpa: the original form
2. tadekātmā-rūpa: the same form, non-different from svayaṁ-rūpa but with different bodily features and specific activities
3. āveśa-rūpa: an empowered form Again, svayaṁ-rūpa is of two types:
 1. svayaṁ-rūpa
 2. svayaṁ-prakāśa ‘svayaṁrūpe—eka kṛṣṇa vraje gopamūrti’

Again, svayaṁ-prakāśa is of two types:

1. prabhāva
2. vaibhava

sei vapu, sei ākṛti prthak yadi bhāse bhāvāveśa-bhede nāma ‘vaibhava-prakāśe’

(Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya 20.171)

“If one form or feature is differently manifested according to a different mode of features, it is called ‘vaibhava-prakāśa’.”

vaibhava-prakāśa kṛṣṇera—śrī-balarāma varṇa-mātra-bheda, saba—kṛṣṇera samāna

(Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya 20.174)

“The first manifestation of the vaibhava feature of Kṛṣṇa is Śrī Balarāma. Śrī Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa have different complexions, otherwise Śrī Balarāma is equal to Kṛṣṇa in all respects.”

In the 5th Chapter of the Adi-līlā of Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Nityānanda-tattva is explained as follows:

sarva-avatārī kṛṣṇa svayaṁ bhagavān tāñhāra dvitīya deha śrī-balarāma

eka-i svarūpa donhe, bhinna-mātra kāya ādya kāya-vyūha, kṛṣṇa-līlāra sahāya

sei kṛṣṇa—navadvīpe śrī-caitanya-candra sei balarāma—saṅge śrī-nityānanda

(Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi 5.4-6)

“The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, is the fountainhead of all avatāras. Lord Balarāma is His second form. These two are one and the same identity. They differ only in form. Lord Balarāma is the first expansion of Kṛṣṇa and He assists in Lord Kṛṣṇa’s transcendental pastimes. That original Lord Kṛṣṇa appears in Navadvīpa as Lord Caitanya, and Balarāma appears with Him as Lord Nityānanda.

śrī-balarāma gosāñi mūla-saṅkarṣaṇa pañca-rūpa dhari’arena kṛṣṇera sevana

āpanearena kṛṣṇa-līlāra sahāya sṛṣṭi-līlā-kārya kare dhari’cāri kāya

sṛṣṭy-ādika sevā, tāñra ājñāra pālana ‘śeṣa’-rūpe kare kṛṣṇera vividha sevana

sarva-rūpe āsvādaye kṛṣṇa-sevānanda sei balarāma—gaura-saṅge nityānanda

(Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi 5.8-11)

“Lord Balarāma is the Original Saṅkarṣaṇa. He assumes five other forms to serve Lord Kṛṣṇa. He Himself helps in the pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa and does the work of creation in four other forms. He executes the orders of Lord Kṛṣṇa in the work of creation and in the form of Lord Śeṣa, serves Kṛṣṇa in various ways. In all the forms, He tastes the transcendental bliss of serving Kṛṣṇa. That same Balarāma is Lord Nityānanda, the companion of Lord Gaurasundara.”

Śrī Balarāma, who is the Deity of the sandhinī potency, serves Kṛṣṇa in His five forms of Mahā-Saṅkarṣaṇa, Kāraṇodakaśāyī, Garbhodakaśāyī, Kṣīrodakaśāyī, and Śeṣa. Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has written as follows in the Amṛtapravāha Bhāṣya (commentary) of Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta:

Balarāma, who is one of the first four expanded forms of Kṛṣṇa in Dvarakā, can be called the Original Saṅkarṣaṇa. He is Mahā-Saṅkarṣaṇa in the second manifested expanded four forms of Nārāyaṇa in Vaikuṇṭha. He serves Kṛṣṇa by taking the form of Mahā-Saṅkarṣaṇa and four other aṁśāṁśa-avatāras—Kāraṇābdhiśāyī, Garbhodaśāyī, Kṣīrodakaśāyī and Śeṣa. He Himself, while assisting in the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa with the four forms of Mahā-Saṅkarṣaṇa, Kāraṇodakaśāyī, Garbhodakaśāyī, and Kṣīrodakaśāyī, also performs the work of creation. Śeṣa, who is also known as Ananta, performs various types of service to Kṛṣṇa. In this way, Balarāma tastes the divine nectar of the service of Kṛṣṇa by accepting all these forms:

sei ta' 'ananta' 'śeṣa'—bhakta-avatara īśvarera sevā vinā nāhi jāne āra

sahasra-vadane kare kṛṣṇa-guṇa gāna niravadhi guṇa gā'na, anta nāhi pā'na

sanakādi bhāgavata śune yāñra mukhe bhagavānera guṇa kahe, bhāse prema-sukhe

chatra, pādukā, śayyā, upādhāna, vasana ārama, āvāsa, yajña-sūtra, śimhāsana

eta mūrti-bheda kari' kṛṣṇa-sevā kare kṛṣṇera śeṣatā pāñā 'śeṣa' nāma dhare

(Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi 5.120-124)

“That Ananta-Śeṣa is the devotee avatāra of Godhead. He knows nothing but the service of Lord Kṛṣṇa. With His thousands of mouths He sings the glories of Lord Kṛṣṇa, but although He always sings in this way, He does not find an end to the qualities of the Lord. The four Kumāras (Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanātana and Sanat) hear Śrīmad Bhāgavatam from His lips, and they in turn repeat the glories of the Lord, to be immersed in the ocean of transcendental bliss of love of God. Ananta-Śeṣa serves Lord Kṛṣṇa by assuming the forms of the Lord’s umbrella, slippers, bedding, pillow, garments, easy chair, residence, sacred thread and throne. He is thus called Lord Śeṣa, as He is the last manifested form of Kṛṣṇa to serve Him. He takes various forms for the service of Kṛṣṇa.”

While referring to Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa's explanation of Laghu-Bhāgavatāmṛta, Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Prabhupāda (in his Anubhāṣya commentary) has written as follows:

The Śeṣa who is the supporter-potency (ādhāra-śakti) of the bedstead of Viṣṇu (wielder of the Śārṅga bow), is in the category of God (Viṣṇu-tattva). The Śeṣa who is the bearer of the planets, is of the category of śaktyāviṣṭa jīva-tattva. The Saṅkarṣaṇa of the second catur-vyūha appears as Rāma, taking with Him Śeṣa who bears the global spheres. There are two features of Śeṣa—one is He who supports the planetary systems on His hoods, and the other is He who is the bedstead servitor.

The Śeṣa who supports the planetary systems is an āveśa-avatāra (absorption-avatāra) of Kṛṣṇa (or Saṅkarṣaṇa), and is therefore also known as Saṅkarṣaṇa. The bedstead feature of Śeṣa always considers Himself to be an eternal servitor and friend of Lord Śārṅgadharma (wielder of the Śārṅga bow). Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself performs His own service in His form of Baladeva. Therefore Śrī Baladeva is the original spiritual master. By the mercy of Baladeva, one obtains the service of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Gurudeva is non-different from Baladeva and Nityānanda. The only difference between Gurudeva and Baladeva is that Gurudeva is śakti-tattva while Śrī Baladeva is omnipotent Viṣṇu-tattva, the possessor of all opulences. Tulasi can be offered to the lotus feet of Śrī Baladeva, but since Gurudeva is śakti-tattva, Tulasi cannot be offered to his lotus feet.

In the 3rd Volume of 'The Sayings of Śrīla Prabhupāda', Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Prabhupāda expresses the following thoughts in relation to Śrī Baladeva: "In the śruti (Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad 3.2.4) it is said: 'nāyamātmā balahīnena labhyaḥ'—'Without the grace of Baladeva, no one can get God'. There can be no auspiciousness or eternal bliss without taking shelter of the lotus feet of Śrī Gurudeva. Śrī Baladeva serves Kṛṣṇa with His body, mind and words. We can be benefited only by His mercy. When we argue with our gurudeva, when we try to rectify or correct gurudeva with our mundane knowledge or try to imitate him artificially without actually following him, then we are following the path of āśrauta (not listening to or hearing the authentic scriptures descending through the bona-fide preceptorial channel) or tarka (argument) instead of the path of śrauta (the following of or listening to scriptures). Only when we give up all such evil-minded tendencies and surrender unto his lotus feet, will following the path of hearing bring auspiciousness to us."

The 10th Canto of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam describes the appearance pastime of Śrī Baladeva:

Suffering from the burden of the demons, Mother Earth took shelter of the creator demigod, Brahma. Brahma and the demigods then went to the shore of the Ocean of Milk and prayed to Viṣṇu. In a state of self-absorbed meditation, Brahma heard a divine voice from the sky, which said that Viṣṇu would soon appear to reduce the burden of the earth.

Brahma then informed the demigods of the oracle and ordered them to take birth along with their wives, in the dynasty of the Yadus and the family of the Paṇḍavas, for the service of the Supreme Lord.

When Vasudeva married Devakī, Kāṁsa, out of affection for his sister, was driving their chariot. At that time, a heavenly voice rang out saying that Devakī's eighth child would kill Kāṁsa. Upon hearing that heavenly voice, Kāṁsa jumped up immediately and prepared to kill Devakī. Even after trying to convince him in many ways, Vasudeva was unable to stop Kāṁsa from carrying out this heinous act. Vasudeva then took an oath before Kāṁsa that whenever he and his wife would have a child, he would surrender it to Kāṁsa. Kāṁsa thought that the saintly Vasudeva would surely keep his word, and therefore with firm confidence, Kāṁsa desisted from the killing of his sister.

In due course of time, upon the birth of the first child of Devakī, Vasudeva took his son and went to Kāṁsa. He handed over his first child to Kāṁsa as he had promised. At that time Kāṁsa returned Vasudeva's first son to him, but later heard from Nārada about the true forms of the residents of Vraja and the Yādavas, about his own previous birth and whether the eighth pregnancy would be counted from the beginning or the end. When Kāṁsa heard such a suspicious statement, he became thoughtful. He then shackled Vasudeva and Devakī in prison and killed the six children of Devakī one after the other. He also imprisoned his father, Ugrasena, and began to oppose the Yādavas. After being harassed by Jarāsandha, Aghāsura, Bakāsura and other demons, the Yādavas fled to different states.

When Śrī Baladeva appeared as the seventh pregnancy of Devakī, Yogamāyā, as per the Supreme Lord's instruction, attracted the seventh pregnancy of Devakī without anyone's knowledge and placed Him in the womb of Rohiṇī, Vasudeva's second wife in Gokula. Since He was attracted from the womb of Devakī by

Yogamāyā and placed in the womb of Rohiṇī, He is therefore known by the names of Rohiṇī-nandana and Saṅkarṣaṇa. Because of giving pleasure to the residents of Gokula He became famous as Rāma, and also became known as Balabhadra due to possessing extraordinary strength.

The citizens of Mathurā lamented, thinking that Devakī's pregnancy had been destroyed. Lord Kṛṣṇa appeared on the 8th day of the dark fortnight of the month of Bhādra (conjoined with the Rohiṇī-nakṣatra) after the appearance of the Presiding Deity of the sandhinī potency, Baladeva Prabhu. Baladeva's appearance day is the full moon day of the month of Bhādra. He appeared as the elder brother for the comprehensive service of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. In the pastimes of Rāma, He appeared as the younger brother Lakṣmaṇa, and was therefore unable to perform the thorough service of Śrī Rāmacandra. In the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa, this is why He appeared as the elder brother. Nanda Mahārāja and Yaśodā Devī also entrusted only Balarāma with the responsibility of looking after the child, Gopāla. While Kṛṣṇa wandered in the forest along with His friends, Balarāma was always engaged in His service. After killing Aghāsura, Kṛṣṇa was taking lunch with the cowherd boys on the banks of a lake. At that time, Brahma, wanting to test Śrī Kṛṣṇa, took away His calves and cowherd boys and hid them in a cave within Sumeru Mountain.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa immediately assumed the forms of the calves and cowherd boys and returned home. Due to returning in this way, neither the cowherds nor the cows were able to understand that their children had been kidnapped, but the cowherds became ecstatic with transcendental love when they touched their children. Upon touching their calves, the cows began shedding tears due to intense love. Although the residents of Vraja were unable to understand the reason for this, Baladeva Prabhu understood that because Kṛṣṇa had expanded Himself as the cowherd boys and calves, the residents of Vraja were exhibiting symptoms of divine love of Godhead. During the Kāliya-damana pastime, the residents of Vraja, being greatly distressed in separation from Kṛṣṇa, wanted to enter into the water polluted by the poison of Kāliya. But Baladeva Prabhu, who knows the glories of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, stopped them from this endeavor and saved them from drowning in Kāliya's lake.

Śrī Baladeva Prabhu performed the pastimes of killing Dhenukāsura in Tālavana and Pralambāsura in Bhāṇḍīravana. When Balarāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa reached the age of paugaṇḍa (ages 5-10), Nanda Mahārāja and other cowherds appointed Them to take care of the cows along with the calves. One day, Balarāma and Śrī

Kṛṣṇa, along with Their friends, arrived in Tālavana while wandering through different forests. The powerful Dhenukāsura, in the form of an ass, along with his powerful cohorts, lived there to guard the palmyra trees so that no living beings could eat the palmyra fruits. Many of the palmyra trees were full of fruits. Due to the scent of the fully ripened palmyra fruits, Tālavana and other places nearby emanated a beautiful aroma. Consequently, the cowherd boys requested Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma to get those fruits for them.

In order to fulfil their desire, Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma took all Their friends and happily entered into Tālavana. Out of affection for Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Baladeva first entered into the forest, and like an intoxicated elephant, shook the palmyra trees. Because of this shaking, palmyra fruits began falling down making a loud sound. Angered by the sound of the falling palmyra fruits, the ass demon Dhenukāsura immediately came there and struck the chest of Balarāma with his hind legs and began jumping around making fearsome sounds. When Dhenukāsura returned to kick Balarāma, Baladeva caught hold of his two legs and wheeled him around with such speed that the demon left his body while he was still being spun. Baladeva then threw the demon to the top of a palmyra tree. The demon's body was so big that the palmyra tree began to break, and crashing against the other palmyra trees, they all began to fall to the ground. When Dhenukāsura's cohorts arrived there in anger, they also received the same fate. The pastime of killing Dhenukāsura took place in Tālavana after the pastime of subduing Kāliya.

In his purport of the pastime of the killing of Dhenukāsura, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has written as follows: “All the demons killed by Śrī Baladeva are all the anarthas (unwanted things) that will be removed by the devotional practitioner with the help of Śrī Baladeva. This is the secret of Vraja-bhajana. Dhenukāsura is the carrying of the burden of superstition. Ignorance and nescience about one's own real self, the real form of the holy name, and the real form of the object of worship, is indicated by Dhenukāsura.”

In the 18th Chapter of the 10th Canto of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, the pastime of the killing of Pralambāsura is described as follows:

Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma's wandering place of Vrajadhāma was decorated with all the pleasing qualities of spring even during the summer season. One day, Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, along with Their friends, were engaged in playing, dancing and singing when Pralambāsura entered their midst disguised as a cowherd boy. The cowherd friends were unable to understand this, but omniscient Lord Kṛṣṇa

understood that the newcomer cowherd was a demon in disguise. In order to kill him, He received him as a friend. All the cowherd boys then divided into two parties for a game. Kṛṣṇa became the leader of one group and Balarāma became the leader of the other. The condition of the game was that the party that was defeated would carry the victor on his shoulder. When they played, Śrīdāma and Vṛṣabha of Balarāma's party became victorious. Consequently, Kṛṣṇa carried Śrīdāma and Bhadrāsena carried Vṛṣabha. On the other side, Balarāma defeated Pralambāsura. Avoiding Kṛṣṇa, Pralambāsura ran away carrying Balarāma stealthily on his shoulders.

*uvāha kṛṣṇo bhagavān śrīdāmānam parājitaḥ vṛṣabham bhadrasenas tu
pralambo rohiṇī-sutam*

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 10.18.24)

Balarāma, understanding the ill motives of the demon, became so heavy on the shoulders of Pralambāsura that he was unable to bear His weight. The demon then assumed his real form. Upon seeing the terrible form of the demon, Haladhara Baladeva at first expressed symptoms of doubt. But just as Indra hurled his lightning bolt, shattering mountains to slay the demons, Baladeva struck the demon a ferocious blow on the head with His fist. This blow shattered Pralambāsura's head and he began to vomit blood. He left his body in this state of repeatedly vomiting blood. The cowherd boys and demigods then began to glorify Lord Baladeva profusely due to the excellence of His deed.

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura describes the purport of the killing of Pralambāsura as follows: “Pralambasura is a symbol of illicit sexual connection (strī-lāmpatya), aspiration for gain, adoration (lābha-pūjā) and name and fame (pratiṣṭhā).”

All Viṣṇu-tattva are accompanied by three potencies: Śrī, Bhū and Līlā (Līlā or Dhāma as the potency of Durgā). Viṣṇu is incomplete without the manifestation of these three potencies. Śrī Gaura-Nārāyaṇa also possesses three potencies: Śrī Lakṣmīpriyā as Śrī potency, Śrī Viṣṇupriyā as Bhū potency and Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma as līlā or nīlā potency. Śrī Baladeva also possesses three potencies, Revatī, Vāruṇī and Līlā or Nīlā.

tomāra kṛpāya sṛṣṭi kare āja deve tomāre se revatī vāruṇī kānti seve

(An alternate reading says: tomāre se revatī vāruṇī sadā seve.) (Caitanya-bhāgavata, Madhya-līlā 15.38)

In Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata, Śrī Baladeva's potencies have been mentioned as Revatī, Vāruṇī and Kānti.

From the description in the 3rd Chapter of the 9th Canto of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, it is known that Śaryāti, the son of Manu, had three sons named Uttānabarhi, Ānarta and Bhūriṣeṇa. Revata, the son of Ānarta, had one hundred sons, of whom the eldest was Kakudmi. On the advice of Brahma, Kakudmi offered his daughter Revatī to the mighty and powerful Baladeva who is the original Viṣṇu-tattva. After offering his daughter, Kakudmi went to Badarikāśrama to perform austerities.

śrī vasu jāhnavā śrī nityānandera preyasī śrī vāruṇī-revatī sakala guṇa rāśī

(Bhakti-ratnākara 12.399)

*śrī vāruṇī revatyovamśe-sambhave tasya priye dve vasudhā ca jāhnavā śrī
sūryadāsasya-mahātmanaḥ sūte kakudmirūpasya ca sūryatejasaḥ*

(Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dīpikā)

Those who were previously consorts of Baladeva— Vāruṇī and Revatī (born in the lineage of Revata), appeared as consorts of Nityananda. Vasudhā and Jāhnavā, who were daughters of Suryadāsa, possessed a splendor like that of the sun. Suryadāsa was the avatāra of Kakudmi. Although Śrī Baladeva is Viṣṇu-tattva, He Himself serves the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa as His foremost servant. He also engages others in the service of Kṛṣṇa and exhibits the pastime of acting as the original spiritual master. In spite of all this, during His manifest pastimes

in this material world, He Himself performed the pastime of accepting a guru in order to teach the importance of taking shelter of a guru. This is described in the 45th Chapter of the 10th Canto of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam.

*prabhavau sarva-vidyānām sarva-jñau jagad-īśvarau nānya-siddhāmalaṁ
jñānaṁ gūhamānau narehitaiḥ*

*atho guru-kule vāsam icchantāv upajagmatuḥ kāśyaṁ sāndīpaniṁ nāma hy
avanti-pura-vāsinam*

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 10.45.30-31)

“Concealing Their innately (self-effulgent) perfect knowledge by Their humanlike activities, the two omniscient Lords of the universe, Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, Themselves the origin of all branches of knowledge, desired to reside at the school of a spiritual master and therefore approached Sāndīpani Muni, a native of Kāśī living in the city of Avantī.”

Sāndīpani Muni, being satisfied with the service of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, taught Them the entire Vedas, political science and the sixty-four varieties of fine arts in sixty-four days.

When Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma expressed the desire to offer guru-dakṣiṇā (a fee or gift given to a priest) to Their spiritual master, the muni asked for the return of his son who had died in the ocean at Prabhāsa Tīrtha. To fulfil the desire of Their spiritual master, Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma went to Prabhāsa-tīrtha and were informed about the abduction of the child by the powerful demon Pāñcājana. Upon hearing this, Lord Kṛṣṇa entered the water and killed the demon but could not find the boy within the demon’s belly. Lord Kṛṣṇa took the conchshell that had grown around the demon’s body. That conch became famous as Pāñcājanya. Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma then reached Yamaloka and loudly blew the conchshell, Pāñcājanya. Upon hearing the sound of the conchshell, Yamarāja arrived there and elaborately worshipped Them. Thereafter, Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma brought the son of Their spiritual master from Yamarāja and gave the child to him as

guru-dakṣiṇā. Sāṇḍīpani Muni expressed great joy to have disciples like Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, and gave Them permission to return home.

śrī gurur-uvāca samyak sampādito vatsa

bhavadbhyāṁ guru-niṣkrayaḥ ko nu yuṣmad-vidha-guroḥ kāmānāṁ avaśiṣyate

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 10.45.47)

“The spiritual master Sāṇḍīpani Muni said, ‘My dear boys, You two have completely fulfilled the disciple’s obligation of offering guru-dakṣiṇā. Indeed, for one who has disciples like You, what further desires could remain unfulfilled?’ ”

Śrī Balarāma was the teacher of Bhīma and Duryodhana in the art of fighting with clubs. Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is the performer of wonderful tasks, took away Rukmiṇī, the daughter of the Vidharbha king, Bhīṣmaka, in order to fulfil her desire. Jarāsandha and two other warriors fought with Kṛṣṇa but were defeated. Rukmiṇī’s brother, Rukmī, who was jealous of Kṛṣṇa, was unable to tolerate this. He again attacked Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Due to Rukmiṇī’s prayers, when Kṛṣṇa was about to kill Rukmī by destroying all his weapons, He let him go, but only after defacing him. At that time, Baladeva came there and pacified Rukmiṇī not to lament unnecessarily out of ignorance.

Although Rukmī was filled with animosity toward Śrī Kṛṣṇa and considered marriage relations with the enemy to be against dharma, he married his granddaughter Rocanā to Aniruddha, the grandson of Rukmiṇī, desiring to please his sister out of extreme affection for her.

Rukmiṇī, Baladeva, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Sāmba, Pradyumna and other Yādavas were present at Aniruddha’s wedding in the city of Bhojakāṭa. After the wedding, on the advice of the arrogant kings headed by the King of Kaliṅga, Rukmī began a gambling match with Baladeva. In the first match, Rukmī defeated Baladeva, whereupon the King of Kaliṅga laughed at the Lord, displaying all his teeth. Later, upon the repeated victory of Baladeva, Rukmī began to say that He was

winning by cheating and lying. Apart from this, Rukmī repeatedly ridiculed Baladeva by saying that He was only expert at tending cows. For some time, Baladeva remained silent, but upon being insulted repeatedly, Lord Baladeva struck Rukmī with His parigha (a kind of iron cudgel used in war in ancient times) to destroy his pride. Rukmi died then and there, and the other offensive kings fled to save their lives.

All living entities are created from the fleeting glance of Kāraṇodakaśāyī Mahā-Viṣṇu who is an aṁśa-avatāra of Śrī Baladeva Prabhu. In this way, Baladeva has a direct relationship with all living entities. Because of His natural compassion for the living beings, He is affectionate toward them and also controls them for their benefit. Therefore He carries the plough, pestle and other weapons. In the 65th Chapter of the 10th Canto of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, there is a description of Śrī Balarāma's visit to Gokula, His consolation of the gopīs by imparting news of the well being of Kṛṣṇa, His sport with the gopīs in the groves by the bank of the Yamunā and His pastime of attracting Yamunā. Sages who became enchanted upon seeing His beauty witnessed this. In this enchanted state, they recited Balarāma's glories and while singing, played kettledrums in the heavens and showered down flower petals. One day during that time, Lord Balarāma drank some intoxicating divine vāruṇī juice that had been sent by the demigod Varuṇa and in an intoxicated state, He began wandering about the forest. While wandering in the forest, He summoned the Yamunā River so that He could play in her waters but she refused to come, thinking that He was intoxicated. Because of her disobedience, Balarāma, in order to punish Yamunā, began to pull her with the end of His plough to split her into hundreds of streams. Frightened and trembling, the goddess Yamunā then fell down at Lord Balarāma's lotus feet, chanting and repeatedly praying for forgiveness. Thereupon, Lord Balarāma forgave her. Later, for the pleasure of the gopīs, the Lord bathed and sported with them for a long time in the waters of the Yamunā. Finishing the water-sports, Baladeva came out of the Yamunā and Goddess Kānti, a special form of Goddess Lakṣmī, presented Him with a set of blue garments, precious ornaments, and a beautiful necklace. Lord Balarāma dressed in the blue garments and wearing the golden necklace, appeared resplendent:

kāmaṁ vihr̥tya salilād uttīrṇāyāsītāmbare bhūṣaṇāni mahārhaṇi

dadau kāntiḥ śubhāṁ srajam

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 10.65.31)

Bearing the mark of the strike of the plough, the Yamunā still exhibits the prowess of Baladeva.

Śrīla Jayadeva Gosvāmī in his composition, Daśāvatāra-stotra, prays to the Lord of the universe in His form as Haladhara (wielder of the plough) in this way:

vahasi vapuṣi viśade vasanam jaladābham hala-hati-bhīti-milita-yamunābham

keśava dhṛta-haladhara-rūpa jaya jagadīśa hare

(Śrī Jayadeva’s Daśāvatāra-stotra, 8th Verse)

“O Keśava! You assumed the form of Haladhara, wielder of the plough! You wear blue garments, which are colored like the water of the River Yamunā who feels great fear due to the striking of Your plough. O Lord of the universe! O Lord Hari in the form of Haladhara, all glories unto You!”

The Hastināpura pastime of Baladeva has been described in the 68th Chapter of the 10th Canto of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam. Sāmba, the son of Kṛṣṇa’s queen Jāmbavatī, had taken away Duryodhana’s daughter Lakṣmaṇā from her svayamvara assembly. The Kauravas were enraged by this improper act and began to fight with Sāmba in order to arrest him. While they were fighting, the Kauravas observed and appreciated the wonderful heroic form of the boy. However, four warriors of the Kaurava party collectively surrounded Sāmba and defeated him by unjust means. They then arrested him along with Lakṣmaṇā, and took them both to Hastināpura. When Śrī Kṛṣṇa and the Yādavas heard from Devarṣi Nārada of this injustice by the Kauravas, they became angry. Taking permission from King Ugrasena, Śrī Kṛṣṇa prepared for war, along with the Yādavas.

Duryodhana was Śrī Baladeva’s disciple in the art of mace fighting. Baladeva being aware of the power of Kṛṣṇa, thought, “If Kṛṣṇa goes to battle, then Duryodhana may lose his life.” Thus, out of compassion for His disciple, He pacified Śrī Kṛṣṇa and the Yādavas, and set off for Hastināpura with several

brāhmaṇas and Yādava elders. During the journey, Baladeva was thinking that upon His persuasion, His disciple Duryodhana would accept His words and free Sāmba along with Lakṣmaṇā. Camping on the outskirts of Hastināpura, He first sent Uddhava to ascertain King Dhṛtarāṣṭra's intentions. When Duryodhana and other Kauravas heard from Uddhava about Baladeva's arrival, they joyfully took auspicious items to Him and worshipped Him. After inquiring about each other's welfare, Lord Balarāma said, "You have captured Sāmba in an unjust fight. In order that there not be any hostilities between you and the Yādavas, I am telling you by the order of King Ugrasena that you should hand Sāmba over to us."

Upon hearing these words of Lord Baladeva, the Kauravas felt insulted and replied with fury, "Amazing! The Yādavas are trying to give orders to the Kauravas? Look at the crookedness of time and how the times have changed! Today, the leather shoe is eager to climb atop one's crowned head. The Yādavas are related to us because of the marital ties of Kuntī Devī, and for this reason only they have the opportunity of sharing our beds, seats and meals. Indeed, it is only by our mercy that they have been given royal thrones, and now they are thinking that they have become equal to us? It is certainly true that they are enjoying the royal crown, royal bed and other paraphernalia today by our mercy only. Just see, they have lost all shame and dare to command us like masters! These Yādavas will surely have to step down from their royal position."

*nūnaṁ nānā-madonnaddhāḥ śāntiṁ necchanty asādhavaḥ teṣāṁ hi praśamo
daṇḍaḥ paśūnāṁ laguḍo yathā*

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 10.68.31)

Upon seeing the misbehaviour of the Kauravas and hearing their abusive words, Balarāma became filled with rage and laughingly spoke as follows, "Those scoundrels who are intoxicated with the pride of wealth and power never want peace. Just as beasts do not show understanding without being beaten by a cudgel, scoundrels cannot come to their senses without physical punishment. I came here desiring the welfare of the Kauravas after pacifying the Yādavas, but they are so proud that they have disrespected Me. So, is King Ugrasena unfit to command the Kauravas when Indra and other planetary rulers are bound to obey

his orders? That Lord whose servant is Lakṣmī devī; the dust of whose lotus feet is carried on the heads of Indra and other rulers of the universe; of whose spiritual identity Brahma, Shiva and Myself are simply aṁśa-avatāras or even aṁśāṁśa-avatāras—is that very Kṛṣṇa not fit to sit on a royal throne? Are the Yādavas indeed like shoes whereas the Kauravas are like the head? I shall surely punish all these impudent Kauravas immediately.”

Thus, Śrī Baladeva, intending to rid the earth of all the Kurus and cast Hastināpura into the Gaṅgā, dug His plough weapon into the southern side of the city and began using it to drag Hastināpura. By the extra-mundane miraculous power of Baladeva, Sāmba was excluded from the submersion of Hastināpura. Upon seeing that Hastināpura was falling into the Gaṅgā due to being pulled by the tip of Balarāma’s plough, the Kauravas became terrified and in great distress cried out, “Trāhi baladeva!” (“O Baladeva, please save us! Please save us!”). Putting Sāmba and Lakṣmaṇā in front of them, they approached Lord Baladeva and surrendered before Him while praying: “O Lord, in Your form of Ananta, You carry the earth on one of Your heads. At the time of annihilation, You destroy the entire universe and lie down to rest on Śeṣa. Please rescue the Kauravas as we are ignorant and misguided.” The protector of the surrendered, Baladeva, forgave them immediately with the words, “Mā bhaiḥ” (“Do not fear.”). Baladeva also killed Narakāsura’s friend, the powerful ape, Dvivida, with His pestle and plough.

*yādavendro ’pi taṁ dorbhyāṁ tyaktvā muṣala-lāṅgale jatrāv abhyardayat
kruddhaḥ so ’patad rudhiraṁ vaman*

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 10.67.25)

“Then furious Baladeva hurled His pestle and plough with both hands, which struck the throat and arms of Dvivida. Dvivida died vomiting blood.”

*namaste tu halagrama namaste tu muṣalāyudha namaste revatīkānta namaste
bhakta-vatsala namaste balināṁ śreṣṭha namaste dharaṇidhara pralambāre
namaste tu trāhi mām kṛṣṇa purvaja*

“Obeisances unto You, O holder of the plough; obeisances unto You, O wielder of the pestle; obeisances unto You, O beloved husband of Revatī; obeisances unto You, O affectionate benefactor of Your devotees; obeisances unto You, O upholder of the earth; obeisances unto You, O best of the mighty; obeisances unto You, O killer³[\[19\]](#) of the Pralambā demon. Please save me, O elder brother (Baladeva) of Kṛṣṇa.”

To teach the people in general, Śrī Baladeva killed Romaharṣaṇa Sūta who was unqualified to recite Śrīmad Bhāgavatam. Later, He accepted the arrangement of the sages to atone for the sin of killing a brāhmaṇa. This incident is described in the 78th Chapter of the 10th Canto of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam as follows:

In order to remain neutral, Lord Baladeva left Dvārakā on the pretext of going on a pilgrimage after hearing of the possibility of war between the Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas. The Lord bathed in sacred places such as Prabhāsa and eventually came to the holy Naimiṣāranya Forest where great sages were performing an extended fire sacrifice. The sages rose from their sitting places and worshipped Baladeva. Baladeva accepted a seat, and after sitting down, the Lord noticed that Romaharṣaṇa Sūta, who was a disciple of Vyāsadeva and a member of the pratiloma sūta caste, was sitting on a higher seat than the other sages. He was also bereft of the etiquette of standing up to welcome the Lord. Lord Balarāma thought, “He is not qualified to recite the Bhāgavatam. He is only performing a recitation of the Bhāgavatam for his livelihood. He is vainly proud of falsely assuming himself to be a scholar. He is a greater sinner than the people who engage in sin.” Baladeva Prabhu, the protector of religion, then killed Romaharṣaṇa with a blade of kuśā grass, which was in His hand. The sages, distressed by the death of Romaharṣaṇa Sūta, prayed to Baladeva, “We gave Romaharṣaṇa Sūta the seat of the spiritual master and granted him a long life so that he could remain alive until the end of our yajña, but You were not able to understand our motive. Therefore, to set a perfect example for the people in general, it would be good for you to undergo the prescribed atonement for slaying a brāhmaṇa.” When Baladeva asked the sages about the atonement for killing a brāhmaṇa, the sages requested Baladeva as follows: “Romaharṣaṇa, who was killed by You, had also been awarded a long life by us. Please preserve the truth of both of these incidents.” Śrī Baladeva, following the Vedic maxim that ‘one’s son takes birth as one’s own self’, granted Romaharṣaṇa’s son, Ugraśravā, the position of speaker of the Purāṇas, and awarded him a long life

with unfailing sensory capacity.

Baladeva performed His pastime of disappearance after the destruction of the Yadu dynasty.

Sri Buddha-Avatara

Among the Daśāvatāra, Śrī Buddha is the ninth avatāra. Additionally, Śrī Buddha is the twentyfourth līlā-avatāra.

In order to condemn the practice of animal sacrifice, Supreme Lord Viṣṇu appeared in the form of Buddha. Śrīla Jayadeva Gosvāmī prays to the Lord of the universe in his Daśāvatāra-stotra:

nindasi yajña-vidher ahaha śruti-jātaṁ sadaya-hṛdaya-darśita-paśu-ghātam

keśava dhṛta-buddha-śarīra jaya jagadīśa hare

(Śrī Jayadeva’s Daśāvatāra-stotra, 9th Verse)

“O Keśava! O Lord of the universe! O Lord Hari, who have assumed the form of Buddha! All glories unto You! O Buddha of compassionate heart, You decry the slaughtering of poor animals performed according to the rules of Vedic sacrifice.”

The name of Buddha also appears in the verse that describes the ten avatāras in

Śrīmad Bhāgavatam:

*matsya kūrmo varāhaśca nṛsimha vāmanastathā rāmo rāmaśca rāmaśca
buddha kalki ca te daśaḥ*

In the daśāvatāra verse of Sāhitya-darpaṇa1[20], we find the names of Buddha and Kalki. The Agni, Vāyu and Skanda Purāṇas also mention the name of Buddha, as does the following verse of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam:

*tataḥ kalau sampravṛtte sammohāya sura-dviṣām buddho nāmnāñjana-sutaḥ
kīkaṭeṣu bhaviṣyati*

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 1.3.24)

“Then, in the beginning of Kali-yuga the Lord will appear as Lord Buddha, the son of Añjanā, in the province of Gayā2[21] (Bihar) just for the purpose of infatuating those who are envious of the faithful demigods.”

In Chapters 17-18 of the 3rd Section of Viṣṇu Purāṇa, Buddha has been designated as ‘Māyāmoha’. Once, while bathing in the waters of the Yamunā, Akrūra was astonished to see KṛṣṇaBalarāma within the river. Coming out, he saw Them seated in a chariot as They had been before appearing in the water. Again he immersed himself in the water, and saw the yellow-clad fourhanded Vāsudeva Śrī Kṛṣṇa along with His associates, graciously seated on the lap of the thousand-hooded Śrī Anantadeva while being worshiped by Brahmā and other demigods. At that time, he prayed to the Lord in the following manner:

namo buddhāya śuddhāya daitya-dānava-mohine mleccha-prāya-kṣatra-hantre

namas te kalki-rūpiṇe

(Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.40.22)

“O Lord! I offer my obeisances unto Your form of Buddha, who, possessing a faultless nature, deluded the miscreants by composing anti-Vedic scriptures. I also offer obeisances unto Your Kalki form, the annihilator of the wicked kṣatriyas who are no better than barbarians.”

The Vedas encode instructions according to the eligibility or qualification of various living beings, especially human beings. But in the course of time, ignorant men took the tāmāsika³[\[22\]](#) orders to be the only instruction of the Vedas⁴[\[23\]](#) and engaged in the extensive killing of animals, sometimes even sacrificing human beings during worship of the demigods. At that time, the Supreme Lord descended in the form of Buddha and outwardly rejected the teachings of the Vedas for the welfare of human beings incapable of comprehending the true teachings of the Vedas. This implies that He disputed and cancelled His own prior teachings, propounded the futility of belief in God and preached to human beings four noble truths, to free them from their violent practices. This act of Buddha provided instantaneous benediction to mankind of that period. As Lord Buddha was the Supreme Lord Himself, many people resolved to follow ahimsā-dharma—the path of non-violence, due to His influence. As a result of non-violence, the hearts of human beings became pious and their qualifications gradually increased, so Lord Śiva appeared as Śaṅkarācārya. He re-established the supreme authenticity and decorum of the Vedas, and founded the philosophy of ‘brahmakāraṇa-vāda’ (Brahman as ultimate cause). In later ages, the Vaiṣṇava stalwarts built the philosophy of bhakti upon this same foundation stone. From the personal and aggregate point of view, these are the steps of progress.

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who is the Lord Himself, removed the incompleteness of the previously propagated philosophies through His ‘acintya-bhedābheda-tattva’ philosophy (the principle of inconceivable simultaneous distinction and non-distinction).

It is said that Śākyasiṃha Buddha, the son of Śuddhodana and Māyā, and Buddha-avatāra, the Vaiṣṇavas' object of adoration, are not one and the same person. Our Most Revered Nityalīlāpraviṣṭa Oṃ Viṣṇupāda 108 Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Siddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Prabhupāda has clearly said, “Śākyasiṃha Buddha was merely a vastly learned person, so we cannot call him the original Buddha or Lord Buddha.”

Ācārya Śrī Śankara has by mistake referred to Māyā's son, Buddha, as ‘Sugata Buddha’ in the following commentary:

sarvathā api anādaraṇīya ayaṃ sugata-samayaḥ śreyaskāmaiḥ iti abhiprāyaḥ

Amarakoṣa-grantha (Sanskrit dictionary) states:

*sarvajñaḥ sugato buddho dharmarājastathāgataḥ samastabhadro bhagavān
mārajillokajijjinaḥ ṣaḍabhijño daśabalo 'dvayavādī vināyakaḥ munīndraḥ
śrīghanaḥ śastā muniḥ śākyamunistu yaḥ*

“All-Knowing, Transcendental, Buddha, King of Righteousness, He Who Has Come, Beneficent, All-Encompassing, Lord, Conqueror of the God of Love—Mara, Victorious of Three Worlds, He Who Controls His Senses, Protector from the Six Enemies, Possessor of the Ten Powers, Speaker of Monism (One Absolute), Teacher, Lord of the Sages, Embodiment of Splendor and Eminent Saint.”

In his commentary on the above verse, Śrīla Ragunātha Cakravartī has written:

“All eighteen names of Buddha from ‘sarvajña’ (omniscient) to ‘śākyamuni’,

refer to Viṣṇu-avatāra Buddha. Therefore, ‘Sugata’ clearly refers only to Viṣṇu-avatāra Buddha.

*sa śākyasiṃhaḥ sarvārthasiddhaḥ śauddhodaniśca saḥ
gautamaścārkabandhuśca māyādevīsutaśca saḥ*

“Teacher of the Śākyas, lion of the Śākyas, accomplisher of all goals, son of Śuddhodana, of Gautama’s line, friend of scholars, son of Māyādevī.”

Here, Śrīla Ragunātha Cakravartī has written:

ete sapta shakyabangshabatirneh buddhamuni bisheshe

“The seven aliases from ‘śākyasiṃha Buddha’ down to ‘māyādevīsuta’ (the son of Māyādevī) refer to monks belonging to the Śākya Dynasty.”

Thus, Sugata Buddha and Śūnyavādī (Śākyasiṃha) Buddha are not the same person. Further evidence is found in Mr. H.T.Colebrooke’s Amarakoṣa, published at Rāmapura in 1807. It is written in Chapter 21, Page 178 of Lalitavistaragrantha that Gautama Buddha performed penances at the same place as the previous Buddha (Viṣṇu-avatāra Buddha). Maybe it is for this reason that in later ages he and Lord Buddha are considered as being one:

*eṣa dharaṇīmunde pūrvabuddhāsanasthaḥ samartha dhanurgrhītvā śūnya
nairātmavānaiḥ klesaripuṃ nihatvā dṛṣṭijālanca bhitvā-śiva virajamśokāṃ
prāpsyate bodhimagryām*

Currently this place is known as Buddha Gayā but Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam refers to it as Kīkaṭa Pradeśa:

*tataḥ kalau sampravṛtte sammohāya sura-dviṣām buddho nāmnāñjana-sutaḥ
kīkaṭeṣu bhaviṣyati*

(Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.3.24)

“Thereafter, in the twenty-first manvantara at the beginning of Kali-yuga, the Lord will appear as Lord Buddha, the son of Añjanā, in Kīkaṭa Pradeśa (the province of GayāBihar), just for the purpose of deluding those who are envious of the faithful demigods.”

According to Śrī Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura’s commentary:

añjana suto ’jina sutaśceti pāṭhadvayam kīkaṭeṣu madhye gayāpradeśe

“The names Añjanasuta⁵[\[24\]](#) and Ajinasuta can both be found in the above verse. The province of Gayā has been called Kīkaṭeṣu.”

Śrīla Śrīdhara Svāmipāda has written in his commentary:

buddhāvatāramāha tata iti añjanasya sutaḥ

ajinasuta iti pāṭhe ajino ’pi sa eva kīkaṭeṣu madhye gayāpradeśe

“Buddha-avatāra refers to Buddha who is the son of Añjanā, and also in another

reading, the son of Ajina. In the above verse, the name is written as Ajina or Añjana, and Kīkaṭa refers to Gayā Pradeśa.”

It is written in the 29th Verse, 36th Chapter of Śrī Nṛsimha Purāṇa:

kalau prāpte yathā buddho bhavennārāyaṇa prabhuḥ

“Lord Nārāyaṇa appeared as Buddha when the age of Kali started.”

This clearly implies that Lord Buddha appeared five thousand years ago.

The following verse can be found in the second paragraph of Nirṇaya-sindhu:

jyaiṣṭha śuklāditīyāyām buddhajanma bhaviṣyati

“Buddha will take birth on the 2nd day of the śuklāpakṣa⁶[\[25\]](#) of the month of Jyaiṣṭha⁷[\[26\]](#).”

Another part of this book describes the mode of worshipping Buddha:

pauṣa śuklāsya saptamyām kuryyāt bhuddhasya pujanam

“Worship Lord Buddha on the 7th day of the śuklāpakṣa of the month of

Pauṣa.8[27]”

This is the prescription for the worship of Buddha, the avatāra of the Supreme Lord. The full moon day of the month of Vaiśākha⁹[28], known as ‘Buddha-pūrṇimā’, is to be celebrated for both Buddhas, subject to consideration of both Buddhas together.

In Śrī Madhvācārya’s commentary on Verse 1.3.24 of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, from his book Bhāgavata-tātparya, the following quotation from Brahmānda Purāṇa has been referred to:

*mohanārthaṁ dānavānāṁ balarupī pathisthitaḥ putraṁ taṁ kalpayāmāsa
mūḍhabudhirjinaḥ svayam tataḥ saṁmohayāmāsa jinādyāna surāṁśakān
bhagavān vāgbhirugrābhirahimsā vācibhirhariḥ*

(Brahmānda Purāṇa)

“In order to delude the demons, He (Lord Buddha) was present in the form of a child on the way while the fool, Jina (a demon), imagined Him to be his son. Later on, Lord Śrī Hari (as avatāra-Buddha) expertly deluded Jina and other demons by His strong words of non-violence.”

There is an authentic Buddhist book, ‘Lankāvatārasūtra’¹⁰[29], in which Rāvaṇa, the king of Lankā, prays to Jina’s son, the ancient Lord Buddha, and to all the Buddhas and Buddhas’ sons who would appear in the future, via this eulogy (stava):

*atha rāvaṇo lankādhipatiḥ gāthāgīten anugāyati sma lankāvatārasūtraṁ vaiḥ
pūrvabuddhānuvarṇitaṁ*

*smarāmi pūrvakaiḥ buddhairjinaputra-puraskṛtaiḥ putrametannigadyate
bhagavānapī bhāṣatām*

bhaviṣyantyanāpate kāle buddhā buddhasutāśca ye

Therefore, this source leaves no doubt that the ancient avatāra-Buddha and the modern Gautama Buddha are not the same person.

Buddha-avatāra has been discussed in various Purāṇas such as Linga, Bhaviṣya, Varāha, Agni, Vāyu, Skanda, Viṣṇu and many others. In the 17th and 18th Chapters of the 3rd Section of Viṣṇu Purāṇa, Buddha is referred to as Māyāmoha. It should be remembered that the Buddha-avatāra whose narrations are found in various Purāṇas and other scriptures, is not the nihilistic Buddha, the son of Śuddhodana.

namo buddhāya śuddhāya daitya dānava mohine

The preceding eulogy to Lord Buddha, taken from Akrūra's prayer in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10-40-22), is the essence of all the Vedas, Vedānta, Purāṇas, Itihāsās and other scriptures. The meaning of this prayer is:

“O Lord, I offer my obeisances unto Your faultless beguiling form of Lord Buddha who enchanted the demons and devils by composing anti-Vedic mantras.”

Commenting on this, Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura has written:

śuddhāya vedaviruddha śāstra pravarttakatve 'pi nirddoṣāya

“The meaning of the word ‘śuddhāya’ is that although He is the founding element of anti-Vedic literature, yet He remains inculpable.”

Therefore, by establishing śāstras opposed to the Vedas, He (avatāra-Buddha) hypnotized devils and demons. This is the reason why some writers of Buddha’s biography consider avatāra-Buddha and human Buddha to be the same.

In Canto 6, Chapter 8, 19th Verse of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, King Indra prays to Lord Buddha with the mantra, ‘buddhas tu paśāṇḍa-gaṇa-pramādāt’. This mantra is from the Nārāyaṇakavaca of Viśvarūpa, the son of Sage Tvaṣṭā. By reciting this mantra Indra prayed, “O Lord Buddha! Save me from the defect of indifference born out of atheistic hypocrisy.”

This means that Lord Buddha, in His ‘asura-vimohanalīlā’ (the pastime of hypnotizing the demons), deluded the wicked natured people by establishing scriptures opposed to the Vedas. “Save me Lord Buddha from the terrible offence of disobeying the Vedas due to ignorance of their secret meanings”. Factually, Lord Buddha is not a condemner of the Vedas for any reason whatsoever. This pastime is meant only to mesmerize the demons. It is written in the 40th chapter of the Māheśvara section of Skanda Purāṇa that:

“After the passing of 3600 years of Kali-yuga, Lord Buddha, the avatāra of Viṣṇu, the saviour of dharma, will appear in the Magadha territory from the womb of Añjanī, fathered by Hemasadana. He will perform many glorious tasks and rule over the earth containing seven islands, for sixty-four years. Then, safeguarding His glories with His devotees, He will retreat to His abode.”

Thus, we can see by the authentic words of genuine scriptures, that Lord Buddha and Śākyasiṃha/Gautama Buddha are not the same. The Lord has established many anti-Vedic scriptures for deluding the demons. Other Buddhas also followed Him and propagated anti-Vedic nihilism. That is why many doubts arise, as all of them have been mentioned together in several places¹¹[\[30\]](#). Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī has written:

veda nā māniyā baudha haya ta nāstika

“Withnoregardforthe Vedas, Buddhahasbecomeatheistic.”

In India, those who have no faith in the Vedas are considered to be atheistic.

According to the German scholar Max Muller, Śākyasiṃha Buddha was born in the Lumbinī Forest of Kapilāvastu in 477 B.C. Ancient Kapilāvastu is a famous district situated near Nepal. Gautama’s father’s name was Śuddhodana and His mother’s name was Māyādevī. Añjanā’s son and Māyā’s son both share the same name but one appeared at Gayā and the other at Kapilāvastu. Thus, the appearance places and parents of Viṣṇu Buddha and Gautama Buddha are totally different. Because the human Buddha was unable to understand the ‘asura-vimohana-līlā’ of Lord Viṣṇu Buddha, he propagated anti-Vedic nihilism.

A SHORT BIOGRAPHY OF GAUTAMA BUDDHA

There was a king of the Ikṣvāku Dynasty named Sujāta, ruling in the western side of Sāketa Nagara. Sujāta had five sons and five daughters. He had special affection for his five sons.

Coincidentally, Sujāta met a flirtatious woman by the name of Jentī. By her he begot a son, Jayanta. As Sujāta was in love with Jentī, he became desirous to give her a boon. Jentī prayed for the exile of Sujāta’s other five sons and for her own son, Jayanta, to be crowned as heir to the throne. Although Sujāta was deeply disappointed upon hearing Jentī’s words, still he felt compelled to grant her the boon so as to fulfil his own promise. The people were saddened when they heard of the exile of Sujāta’s sons, and consequently they accompanied them to the forest. The first place they reached was Kāśī-kośala state, but eventually they came to the āśrama of Kapila Ṛṣi in the Himālayan region. At the āśrama of Kapila Ṛṣi, Sujāta’s sons fell in love with Kapila’s daughters and subsequently married them. Hearing the news of his sons’ marriage, Sujāta also

went to the āśrama. Upon hearing all the relevant details, he declared the marriage to be proper and gave it his approval. Afterwards, Sujāta's sons were known by the name 'Śākya'.

With the permission of Kapila Ṛṣi, the Śākya-kumāras built a large city named Kapilavastu. The eldest son, Apura, became the king of that city and a beautiful girl named Amita was born into his dynasty. As an adult she became afflicted with leprosy and because of this, her brother took her away to the Himālayan Mountains. There, he enclosed her in a large cave stocked with many foodstuffs. Before returning he shut the entrance to the cave with a large boulder. Fortunately, Amita's leprosy was eventually cured by the cave's heat and she regained her lost beauty. Then, fortune continuing to smile upon her, a tiger came and removed the boulder obstructing the entrance to the cave.

Once, a king by the name of Kola went there and saw the beautiful girl Amita. They married and she later gave birth to thirty-two sons. Reaching maturity, the sons came to know about their ancestors from their mother. Consequently, they came to Kapilavastu and in the course of events, married the Śākyas daughters. Thereafter, they came to be known as the 'Kāliyā Dynasty'.

In the land of the Śākyas was a district named Devadeha. The king of Devadeha, Subhūti, had five daughters. The king of Kapilavastu, Śuddhodana, married two daughters of Subhūti named Māyā and Mahāprajāvatī Gautamī. On the full moon day of the month of Vaiśākha, Māyādevī gave birth to a son in a beautiful garden called Lumbinī, near Kapilavastu. It appeared that with the birth of a son, all the desires of Śuddhodana had been fulfilled, thus he named his son Sarvārtha-siddhi or alternatively, Siddhārtha. Seven days after Siddhārtha's birth, his mother Māyādevī died. At that time, Siddhārtha was brought to Kapilavastu to be brought up by his mother's sister, Mahāprajāvatī Gautamī.

As a named Asita happened to live near the Himālayas. He came to Kapilavastu and upon seeing the twelve symptoms of a great person in Siddhārtha, prophesied that if he continued to live within his worldly circuit, he would eventually go on to become a great emperor, but if he renounced his home he would become the knower of all knowledge—'Saṃbodhi'. Therefore, Buddha was formerly known as Siddhārtha, Gautama and Śākyasimha, and later became famous with yet one more name—'Bodhisattva'.

In accordance with the Indian custom, upon reaching adulthood, he was sent to

his gurudeva's house for a proper education. From Viśvāmitra Upādhyāya he learned Brāhmī, Kharoṣṭrī, Puṣkarasādī, Aṅgalipi and sixty-four other languages of various countries. He also became an expert in the Vedas and Upaniṣads. After returning from his guru's home, his father, Śuddhodana, arranged for his marriage to Gopā, the daughter of Dandapāṇi Śākya.

Although Siddhārtha's father tried to ensnare him in worldly matters through marriage, Siddhārtha was not at all interested in affairs of the world¹²[\[31\]](#). Since childhood he had learned of the transient nature of things, so he possessed natural apathy for this world.

The causes of Siddhārtha's apathy toward the material world have been described in the following way:

One day, Siddhārtha was going by chariot to visit a garden when he saw an extremely aged person who had been forsaken by his relatives. He was in a very weak and helpless condition. Seeing this old man, Siddhārtha started to ponder over the observation that the human beings of this world are all so ignorant. Old age is inevitable and bound to attack all, one day or another.

Another day, at the southern gate of the city, Siddhārtha saw a sick man in a very pitiful state who was smeared all over with excrement and urine. Seeing him, Siddhārtha contemplated the fact that diseases are extremely dreadful. He found it very surprising that learned persons, despite being aware of these facts, were often quite busy merrymaking.

One day, at the western gate of the city, Siddhārtha saw a dead man surrounded by a group of people who were hysterically lamenting and wailing in mournfulness. Seeing this sight, Siddhārtha decided that there is no value to this life as it may end at any time.

Another day, at the northern gate of the city, Siddhārtha saw a calm, abstemious and serious brahmacārī (a celibate monk) peacefully wandering around with a begging bowl. The brahmacārī mendicant, having given up all lust, material desires and pleasures while embracing asceticism, was wandering about in search of peace of mind and tranquillity. He was supporting his life by the collecting of very simple foodstuffs. Seeing his tranquil personage, devoid of all sorts of attachment and envy, Siddhārtha decided that only this kind of lifestyle would provide eternal benediction to all living beings.

Observing Siddhārtha's detachment from mundane issues, Śuddhodana tried extremely hard to engage him in household life, but all his efforts went in vain. Siddhārtha's charioteer, Chandoga, also advised him that he would never again obtain such a prosperous, affluent and pleasing place like Kapilavastu, even after rigorous penance. He further stated that it would be most inappropriate for him to leave his beautiful wife. Though Chandoga tried to negatively influence Siddhārtha's urge to renounce this mundane world, he too failed in this task and at the midnight of Puṣyā-nakṣatratithi, Siddhārtha renounced the world.

At the time of renouncing the world, Siddhārtha gave all the jewels he was wearing to his charioteer Chandoga. He even destroyed and threw away the crest on his forehead and donned saffron clothes. The three respective locations where Siddhārtha separated from Chandoga, destroyed his crest and put on saffron clothes have been established as 'caitya' (shrine).

Chandoga then returned to the capital, gave all the jewels of Siddhārtha to King Śuddhodana and narrated the whole incident to him. Upon hearing the details of Siddhārtha's renunciation, overwhelmed by sorrow, his father began weeping. Seeing no possibility of Siddhārtha's return, the grief stricken Śuddhodana threw all the extremely precious jewels (ābharaṇa) of Siddhārtha into a pond. Since that time the pond has been known by the name of 'Ābharaṇa'.

When Siddhārtha's wife awoke in the morning and heard the news of the renunciation of her husband, out of intense grief she cut off all her beautiful hair and cast away all the jewels from her body. She fell to the ground like a person severely wounded by a weapon and began weeping "Oh! I have lost all the pleasures of my life."

After giving up the world, Buddha or Bodhisattva, initially went to Vaiśālī City and observing the vow of celibacy, took initiation from Ārāṇakālāma Upādhyāya. He remained there for some time without finding any happiness, and eventually left for Magadha. There, he started begging for food for himself. When the Magadha king, Bimbisāra, came to know about Siddhārtha, he desired to give his whole empire to him. However, Bodhisattva replied, "These sensuous objects are poisonous. They are the treasure houses of unlimited vices.

Afflicted by lust, people indulging in sensuous enjoyment, experience hellish torture. I regard the carnal desire as hateful as phlegm and bile. I have accepted asceticism with the desire to attain boddhatva".

Bimbisāra said, “I am a disciple of your father Śuddhodana. If you attain boddhatva, I shall also follow this dharma (religion)”. After that, Bodhisattva remained with Upādhyāya Rudraka for some time and undertook a spiritual education. There, while studying theology, he realised that the fire of knowledge is ignited only after the absolute disappearance of the desire to enjoy.

After this, he undertook severe penance for six years on the bank of Nairāñjanā River, near Uruvilvā Village of Gayā. Gradually, his body began to whittle away. When Bodhisattva sat down in a yogic posture at Bodhidruma near the Nairāñjanā River, the enemy of sad-dharma, Māra (Kandarpa or Cupid, the god of sensuous love) tried to prevent him from attaining boddhatva. Rati (sexual pleasure), Tṛṣṇā (greed) and Ārati (affection) came in the form of three damsels and tried to distort and divert his attention by their numerous antics, but to no avail. Thus, Bodhisattva defeated Māra and his cohorts Rati, Tṛṣṇā and Ārati, and achieved absolute tranquillity.

Upon ascertaining the cause of the world’s sorrows and the method of its prevention, Bodhisattva adopted the name ‘Buddha’ (the Enlightened One). He ascertained the cause of sorrow in the following twelve steps starting from one’s previous birth (bhavacakra): 1) avidyā (ignorance) causes 2) saṃskāras (impressions, present life volitional formations), which cause 3) vijñāna (knowledge), which leads to 4) nāmarūpa (mind and form). Nāmarūpa causes 5) ṣaḍāyatana (sense perceptions or sense bases), which cause 6) sparśa (contact), which causes 7) vedanā (pain or feeling) leading to 8) tṛṣṇā (greed or craving). Tṛṣṇā leads to 9) upādāna (attachment), which causes 10) bhava (future life-becoming), which causes 11) jāti (birth), which leads to 12) jarā-maraṇa (old age and death) as well as concomitant sorrow and other related miseries. Thus, ignorance or lack of knowledge is the cause of all miseries. After the attainment of boddhatva, Buddha stayed in Bodhidruma for one week.

By the influence of Buddhadeva, fifty-four Yuvarājas (crown princes), one thousand pilgrims, Sāri’s son—Maudgalyāyana, and many other persons accepted Buddhism. When Buddhadeva came to Kapilavastu City, his father, Śuddhodana was astonished to see him. Buddha’s son—Rahul, stepbrother Nanda and cousins Aniruddha and Ānanda Devadatta, also took shelter of the religion or sect founded by Buddhadeva. Prasenjit, the king of Kośala, also took initiation into Buddhism. After this, the king of Magadha, Bimbisāra, along with his wife and many other persons, accepted Buddhism.

During his stay in Pāṭali Village, Buddha educated the resident religious practitioners on the subject of the eradication of sorrow. He spoke about four noble truths: 1) the fact that suffering exists 2) the cause of suffering 3) the cessation of suffering and 4) the path one should follow to end suffering.

This world is full of miseries. There are specific reasons for these miseries and a method for inhibiting them. According to Buddha, it is useless to reason about or discuss on the basis of scripture, the form of the living being, the form of the Supreme Absolute or the form of the world. For example, say an arrow has pierced the chest of a person and he is writhing in immense pain. In such a situation, is it not useless to think about where the arrow came from and how it caused the injury? In the preceding circumstances, to pull the arrow out would be the best way of relieving the pain. In order to establish the propriety of such thoughts of Buddha, Buddhist philosophy was developed at a later date. No ‘ism’ of any kind can be adequately established without a foundation of proper philosophical principles.

According to Buddhist scriptures, hunger is more painful than disease and similarly, life is comparatively more troublesome than sorrow. Old age, disease, death and miseries are all concerns of the body. Therefore, until the cycle of birth and death of the body ends, miseries will continue. To restrict the misery-ridden aspect of life is final emancipation (nirvāṇa), and only final emancipation can be the greatest pleasure.

*jighacchā paramā rogā saṅkhāra parama duḥkham etaṃ ñatvā yathābhūtaṃ
nirvāṇaṃ paramaṃ sukhaṃ*

According to Buddhist philosophy, nothing is stable for even more than a moment—neither the soul nor God possess stability. Here, the point to be pondered is that if the soul is impermanent, then upon what basis could the thesis of birth and rebirth be accepted? However, in Buddhist philosophy the concept of rebirth has in fact been accepted. To answer this doubt, the Buddhist philosophy states that when a body constituted of rūpa-skandha (gross and subtle bodies), vedanā-skandha (pain), saṃjñā-skandha (difference), saṃskāra-skandha (impressions) and vijñāna-skandha (knowledge) appears in an aggregate of things, we erroneously think that to be the soul. Similarly, the rūpa-vedanā-skandha appears and disappears (or in other words, the material form is

destroyed) every moment. According to Buddhism, existence does not end immediately after the destruction of the body. After death five types of births occur, although these are deemed as ‘new birth’ rather than ‘rebirth’. This sequence ends with the destruction of greed and karma, and then finally the state of emancipation is attained. In other words, in Buddhist philosophy the veracity of the eternal soul, Vedas and Supreme Lord has been disregarded, which is why it is considered to be an atheistic philosophy.

After the disappearance of Buddha, this dharma was divided into two branches — ‘Hīnayāna’ (Lesser Vehicle) and ‘Mahāyāna’ (Greater Vehicle). The followers of Hīnayāna have accepted the teachings of Buddha without deviation. This sect is not accessible to all, as it is the method for powerful and self-dependent devotees.

Over the course of time, the Buddhist religion was propagated to several countries where people following other religious systems gave up their particular faith and accepted Buddhist dharma. Consequently, sparks of emotions from the sentimental plane of their previously practised faiths and religions became transubstantiated into Buddhism. Therefore, the purity and rigidity of the Buddhist religion was compromised to a large extent. These transformed and expanded branches of Buddhism are called ‘Mahāyāna’. This Mahāyāna sect is accessible to the general populace. A branch of Mahāyāna followers say that creation takes place from the void (śūnya) and that dissolution returns to the void. Only the void is true and all other things are false. Nowadays, there is another branch under Mahāyāna, which regards Buddha as God, and regards faith in the Supreme Lord as a valid method.

In Buddhism, the procedure for attaining the state of ‘saṃbodhi’ or the state of final emancipation (nirvāṇa), has been described in the following way:

Firstly, the five obstructions should be eradicated, i.e. kāma (lust), hiṃsā (violence), ālasya (laziness or slothfulness), vicikitsā (doubt) and moha (ignorance). After this, the twenty-four negative emotions of the heart should be removed, i.e. krodha (anger), upanāh (confinement), mṛkṣ-apradāna (hypocrisy), īrṣyā (envy or jealousy), mātsarya (malice), śāṭhya, (wickedness), māyā (delusion), mada (pride), nihiṃsā (killing), ahrī (shamelessness), anapatratā (harshness), styāna (stealing), uddhatya (haughtiness), aśrāddha (disrespect), kaupinya (sinfulness), pramāda (inadvertence), muṣitasmr̥tītā (remembrance of stolen things), vikṣepa (distraction), asaṃprajanya-kaukr̥tya (condemnable illicit

birth), siddha (the seduction of material perfections or achievements), vitarka (argument) and vicāra (thought). In short, the body is impure, distress is sorrowful, the heart is restless or fickle and matter is false. These four facts should always be kept in mind. Finally, the attributes of higher knowledge, memory, pious deeds, strength, affection, inquiry, emancipation and detachment must be cultivated. Only then can the state of samādhi be achieved.

There is no scripture directly written by Gautama Buddha himself. The disciples and subsequent followers of Buddhadeva have scripted his teachings in the Pāli language. They are divided into three parts known as 1) Sūkta-piṭaka

2) Vinaya-piṭaka and 3) Abhidharma-piṭaka.

At a time when failure to comprehend the actual meaning of the scriptural teachings and consequently, violence in the guise of religion took precedence, the Supreme Lord appeared in the form of Buddha and rid mankind of such violence. It is for this very reason that non-violence (ahimsā) is regarded as the basis of Buddhism.

During his reign, the emperor of Magadha, King Aśoka, developed a keen interest in Buddhism. He was deeply aggrieved by the merciless massacre in the Kalinga War, and this transformed his heart. After this event, he took initiation into Buddhism from Upagupta, a Buddhist monk, and devoted himself to the preaching of the religion. Buddhism outside India was preached in China, Burma (Myanmara or Brahmadeśa), Tibet, Japan, Thailand, Korea and Śrī Lankā (South Siṃhala) and other places. Buddhism was propounded and propagated from India. However, due to the preaching of Śaṅkarācārya, the effect of Buddhism in modern India is not prominently visible, as very few followers remain.

Sri Kalki-Avatara

he last avatāra among the Daśāvatāra is Lord Śrī Kalki. It is also written that the twenty-fifth and final lila-avatāra is Lord Kalki. Generally, these twenty-five

avatāras appear in every kalpa. That is why they are also known as kalpa-avatāras. In his Daśāvatāra-stotra, Śrīla Jayadeva Gosvāmī prays to Lord Kalki in this way:

mleccha-nivaha-nidhane kalayasi karavālaṁ dhūmaketum iva kim api karālam

keśava dhr̥ta-kalki-śarīra jaya jagadīśa hare

(Śrī Jayadeva’s Daśāvatāra-stotra, 10th Verse)

“Lord Keśava assumes the comet-like form of Kalki with a terrible sword to annihilate the wicked barbarians. O Lord of the universe! O Lord Hari! O Lord in the form of Kalki, all glories unto You!”

Lord Kalki will appear in the home of a religious and highly gentle brāhmaṇa, Śrī Viṣṇu Yaśā, in a village named Śambhala¹[\[32\]](#). The Lord of the universe, Kalkideva, will possess all eight mystic perfections or siddhīs such as aṇimā (the ability to become atomically small) and others, as well as an unequalled luster. He will ride on a fast-moving steed and suppress the wicked. The swift horse on which He will ride to suppress the doers of evil will be named Devadatta. While riding on Devadatta, Kalkideva will travel all over the world at great speed, and with His sword He will annihilate countless disguised plunderers and mlecchas who are a burden to the earth. After this, the hearts of all people will become sanctified by the touch of the air carrying the fragrance of sandalwood and other sacred cosmetics decorating Kalkideva. Again, by the desire of Lord Vāsudeva, a large number of progeny will take birth. By the appearance of Supreme Lord Kalki, people endowed with the quality of goodness will take birth at the beginning of Satya-yuga.

*yadā yadā hi dharmasya glānir bhavati bhārata abhyutthānam adharmasya
tadātmānaṁ sṛjāmy aham*

*paritrāṇāya sādhūnām vināśāya ca duṣkṛtām dharma-saṁsthāpanārthāya
sambhavāmi yuge yuge*

(Bhagavad-Gītā 4.7-8)

“Whenever there is a decline of dharma (righteousness) and a prevalence of adharma (unrighteousness), the Supreme Lord appears, millennium after millennium, to deliver the pious and annihilate the dishonest, as well as to re-establish dharma.”

In Kali-yuga, when there is a terrible and extensive rise of irreligion leading to an ever-increasing defilement of society, the demigods will take shelter of Lord Viṣṇu. Understanding the desires of the demigods, the Lord will perform the pastime of appearing in the previously described village of Śambhala and will accept Viṣṇu Yaśā and his wife Sumati as His parents. He will appear on the 12th day of the waxing moon in the month of Vaiśākha (April-May). Reaching adulthood, He will annihilate all the mlecchas of the dwelling place of Buddhists, as well as Kuthodevī, the wife of the Rākṣasas of Kālkaṇja, and all other mlecchas. He will even destroy Kali and re-establish dharma.

It has also been said that Lord Kalki will obtain the Vedic knowledge from Paraśurāma and the military science from Lord Śiva. The horse on which He will ride while destroying the wicked will be white in colour. In the 1st Canto of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, He has been described as the twenty-second avatāra.

*athāsau yuga-sandhyāyām dasyu-prāyeṣu rājasu janitā viṣṇu-yaśaso nāmnā
kalkir jagat-patiḥ*

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 1.3.25)

“Thereafter, at the conjunction of the two yugas, when the rulers of the earth have degenerated into plunderers, the Lord of the creation, Jagannātha-Viṣṇu,

will appear as the son of Viṣṇu Yaśā and be renowned by the name ‘Kalki’.”

Supreme Lord Kalkideva saves the living beings from the evil influence of Kali-yuga and re-establishes them in dharma. Such is described in the 6th Canto of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam:

*dvaipāyano bhagavān aprabodhād buddhas tu pāṣaṇḍa-gaṇa-pramādāt kalkiḥ
kaleḥ kāla-malāt prapātu dharmāvanāyuru-kṛtāvatāraḥ*

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 6.8.19)

“May Supreme Lord Vyāsadeva protect me from all kinds of ignorance. May Lord Buddha protect me from activities opposed to the Vedic principles as well as laziness leading to bewilderment and forgetfulness of the Vedic principles of knowledge and ritualistic actions. May Kalkideva, who is considered the supreme descent of Godhead to protect righteousness, protect me from the dirt of the age of Kali.”

Śrīla Narahari Ṭhākura has written in his ‘Bhaktiratnākara’ that those who call themselves God are the disciples of Kali. Their punisher is Lord Kalkideva:

se pāpiṣṭha āpanāra bolāya ‘gopāla’

ataeva tāre sabe bolaye ‘śiyāla’keha kahe – mahā amaṅgala e sabāra

e saba mlecchera śāstā kalki avatāra

(Bhakti-ratnākara 14.175-176)

“He who declares himself to be God is extremely sinful. All call him a jackal or a cheat. Such dreadful ominous barbarians will be punished by Kalki-avatāra.”

Śrī Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vedavyāsa Muni describes the holy biography and glories of Kalkideva in detail in his Kalki Purāṇa:

śambhale viṣṇu yaśaso gr̥he prādurbhavābāmyaham

sūmatyām mātari vibho kanyāyām tvannideśataḥ

*caturbhir bhrātr̥bhirdeva kariṣyāmi kali-kṣayam bhavanto bāndhavā devāḥ
svāmśenāvatarīṣyatha*

(Kalki Purāṇa 2.4-5)

“Śrī Hari said to the lotus-born Brahmā, ‘At your request, I shall take birth on the earth in the home of the brāhmaṇa, Viṣṇu Yaśā, from the womb of his wife, Sumati. I shall destroy Kali with My four brothers. O demigods! You should also take birth on your behalf and establish friendly relations with Me for the benefit of the inhabitants of heaven.’ ”

Kamalā Devī (Padmā), the beloved of Lord Kalki, will appear from the womb of Kaumudī, the wife of Bṛhadratha, the king of Siṃhala. Kalkideva will be four-armed at first, but will later assume a two-armed form at the request of Brahmā. Rāma, Paraśurāma, Kṛpa, Vyāsa and Aśvatthāmā will assume the forms of mendicants (bhikṣu-deha) to see Kalkideva. Lord Kalki, riding on His horse with sword in hand, will appear in the city of Bhallāṭa with His army. There will be a great battle with the powerful glorious King Śaśidhvaja, who will be a devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Suśāntā, the wife of Śaśidhvaja, will also be a devotee of Lord Hari. In this terrible battle between Kalki and Śaśidhvaja, a large number of infantry, cavalry and elephantry will be destroyed. After offering prayers to Kalki, when the devotee Śaśidhvaja attacks Supreme Lord Kalki according to the

regulations of war, Lord Kalki will faint. Pretending to have fainted, Lord Kalkideva will come with Śaśidhvaja to his palace. There, He will accept the worship of Śaśidhvaja and his devoted wife, Suśāntā. At that time, Dharma and Kṛta-yuga (Satya-yuga) will also arrive there. Due to the repeated and lengthy prayers of Suśāntā, Lord Kalki will be pleased. He will give up His swoon and stand up like a warrior. At that time, Suśāntā will be at His front, Kṛta-yuga at His left side, Dharma at His right side and the great devotee king, Śaśidhvaja, at his back.

King Śaśidhvaja will call his sons and according to the desire of his wife, he will surrender his daughter Ramā to the lotus feet of Lord Kalkideva. Kalki Purāṇa describes how King Śaśidhvaja became a devotee.

Śaśidhvaja and his wife had formerly been born as foul smelling flesh-eating eagles. A hunter had trapped them in a net and brought them to the bank of the River Gaṅgā. There he pulverized their heads by striking them on a black stone found in the river Gandaki (which are representations of Viṣṇu called śālagrāma śīla) and killed them. Since they had departed from their bodies on a holy śālagrāma-śīlā marked with a cakṛa on the bank of the Gaṅgā, they assumed four-armed forms and went to Vaikuṇṭha-dhāma. After living there for one hundred yugas they came to the abode of Brahmā, where they lived for five hundred yugas and then lived four hundred years in paradise. After this, they attained human births as devotees of Lord Hari.

A detailed description of Kalkideva along with the gist of subjects and incidents has been described in Kalki Purāṇa as follows:

The conversation between Śuka and Mārkaṇḍeya Muni; a description of the Adharma dynasty; a description of Kali; the journey of the earth in the form of a cow along with the demigods to the abode of Brahmā; the birth of Hari in the home of Viṣṇu Yaśā according to the promise of Brahmā; the birth of four brothers as partial manifestations of Śrī Hari from the womb of Sumati in Śambhala village; the conversation between father and son; Kalki accepts the sacred thread; the father and son live together; Kalki learns the Vedas and military science; the meeting with Lord Śiva; Kalki prays to, and receives boons from Lord Śiva; Kalki obtains the company of Śukadeva; Kalki returns to Śambhala village and describes the boons of Lord Śiva to His relatives; at the request of King Viśākhayūpa, Kalki describes His own form; the glories of the brāhmaṇas; the arrival of Śuka; the conversation between Kalki and Śuka; Śuka

describes Simhala; by the boon of Hara-Mahādeva, the kings become women just by seeing Padmā at her svayamvara; Padmā's sorrow; Kalki's attempt at marriage; Śuka is motivated to be a messenger; the mutual introduction of Śuka with Padmā; the method of worship of Hari; meditation on Lord Hari from His feet to His face; Padmā gives her ornaments to Śuka; Śuka again meets with Kalki; Kalki sets off to marry Padmā; the meeting with Padmā by the deception of water-sports and then marriage; the kings regain their masculinity just by seeing Kalki; the arrival of Ananta; Ananta's discussion with the kings in the assembly; a description of Ananta's birth as a eunuch; prayers to Lord Śiva; Ananta's father passes away seeing mājā in Viṣṇu-kṣetra; the biography of Ananta; Ananta's knowledge, renunciation and so on; the departure of the kings; Kalki goes to Śambhala with Padmā; Viśvakarmā builds a city in Śambhala; Kalki, together with Padmā, His relatives and His armies, resides in the house built by Viśvakarmā; suppression of the Buddhists; the Buddhist women travel to the battlefield; the presence of the sages named Bālakhilya; selfdedication; the killing of the Rākṣasī Kuthodevī along with her sons; the sages meet with Kalki in Haridvāra; a description of the lunar and solar dynasties; the holy life of Lord Rāma; the meeting with Maru and Devāpi who had come for battle; the killing of the violent Kokavikoka; Kalki goes to Bhallāṭa city; the battle with Śayakaṇa and others; Kalki's battle with King Śaśidhvaja; the devotion of Suśāntā; Kalki brings Dharma and Kṛta-yuga from the battlefield; Suśāntā prays to Kalki; Kalki's marriage to Ramā; a description of Śaśidhvaja's previous life in the assembly; the reason for his becoming old; Śaśidhvaja obtains liberation from Kalki; deliverance of the viṣa-kanyā; coronation of the kings; prayers by mājā; various sacrifices in Śambhala village; Viṣṇu Yaśā is liberated by Nārada; the nature of Kṛta-yuga and dharma; the vow undertaken by Rukmiṇī; Kalki's wanderings; the birth of Kalki's sons and grandsons; the presence of demigods and Gandharvas in Śambhala village and after this, the departure of Kalki to Vaiṣṇava.

About the Author

His Divine Grace Śrīla Bhakti Ballabh Tīrtha Gosvāmī Mahārāja is presently one of the foremost spiritual leaders of the mission of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and His associates in the world today. He is the dearly beloved disciple of Śrīla Bhakti Dayita Madhava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, who is in turn the equally beloved disciple of Śrīla Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Gosvāmī Prabhupāda.

His Divine Grace Bhakti Ballabh Tīrtha Gosvāmī Mahārāja appeared in 1924 in Assam, India, on Rāma-navami, the most auspicious appearance day of Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa in His form as Rāmacandra. Having been brought up in a pious environment, he developed a strong inclination to search for the ultimate goal of life, which led him to take up the study of philosophy at Calcutta University. While studying at the university, he came in contact with his spiritual master, His Divine Grace Śrīla Bhakti Dayita Madhava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, and immediately became attracted by his transcendently powerful personality. After completing his Masters Degree in Philosophy in 1947, Śrīla Tīrtha Mahārāja wholeheartedly and unreservedly dedicated his life to the service of his spiritual master.

His service attitude was so exemplary that soon Śrīla Madhava Mahārāja established him as the Secretary of the devotional institution known as ‘Sree Chaitanya Gauḍīya Maṭh’, which has over twenty āśramas (monasteries) in India alone. He was awarded sannyasa, the order of renunciation, in 1961. Eventually, Śrīla Madhava Mahārāja, seeing his disciple’s degree of dedication and sincerity combined with an astute and practical mind, selected him as his worthy successor. After the disappearance of his beloved spiritual master Śrīla Mādhava Gosvāmī Mahārāja in 1979, Śrīla Tīrtha Mahārāja was appointed as President-Ācārya of the Maṭh. He has received the fortunate blessings and great affection of many of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta’s prominent followers such as: Śrīla Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Deva Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrīla Bhakti Promode Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrīla Bhakti Hṛdaya Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrīla Bhakti Akiñcana Kṛṣṇa Dāsa Babaji Mahārāja, Śrīla Bhakti Kumud Śānta Gosvāmī Mahārāja and many others.

For the last five decades, Śrīla Tīrtha Mahārāja has been engaged in the propagation of the all-embracing doctrine of transcendental divine love of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, to counter the present trend of violence and cruelty and to bring about unity of hearts among all, irrespective of caste, creed or religion. ‘Example is better than precept’ is his way of preaching. He has always practiced what he preaches. Śrīla Tīrtha Mahārāja is known for never deviating even one inch outside the four corners of the prescripts of the holy scriptures. His Divine

Grace is a renowned authority on Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava philosophy, and is beloved by thousands of devotees throughout the world as the very embodiment of humility and spiritual affection.

Now at the age of 80, inspired by the grace of his gurudeva, Śrīla Tīrtha Mahārāja is always on the move, going from towns to villages in India and also abroad, propagating the divine message of Bhagavad-gītā and Śrīmad Bhāgavatam.

At the behest of his beloved śikṣa-guru (instructing preceptor), His Divine Grace Śrīla Bhakti Promode Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrīla Tīrtha Mahārāja is preaching the message of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu throughout the world, having started with a tour of the United States in 1997.

His Divine Grace Śrīla Bhakti Ballabh Tīrtha Gosvāmī Mahārāja is the present President-Ācārya of Sree Chaitanya Gauḍīya Maṭh devotional institution and is also the Founder-Ācārya of GOKUL (Global Organisation of Kṛṣṇacaitanya's Universal Love). He also serves as President of the World Vaiṣṇava Association (WVA).

His Divine Grace is always engaged in writing articles and books of a profoundly spiritual nature in several native languages as well as English, for the eternal benefit of the conditioned souls of the world. To date, his books in English include: Śuddha Bhakti, Sages of Ancient India, A Taste of Transcendence, Sri Chaitanya: His Life and Associates, The Holy Life of Śrīla B.D. Madhava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Guru Tattva, Affectionately Yours, Hari Kathā and Vaiṣṇava Aparādha and the present book, Daśāvatāra.

SANSKRIT PRONUNCIATION GUIDE VOWELS

a—like the a in organ or the u in but

ṛ—like ree in reed

ā—like the a in far, but held twice as long as short a

l̄—like l followed by r (lr)

i—like the i in pin

e—like the e in they

ī—like the i in pique, but held twice as long as short i

ai—like the ai in aisle

u—like the u in push

o—like the o in go

ū—like the u in rule, but held twice as long as short u

au—like the ow in how

CONSONANTS

k—as in kite d—as in dove, but with the tongue against the teeth

kh—as in Eckhart dh—as in red-hot, but with the tongue against the teeth

g—as in give n—as in nut, but with the tongue against the teeth

gh—as in dig-hard p—as in pine

ñ—as in sing ph—as in uphill (not pronounced like f)

c—as in chair b—as in bird

j—as in joy bh—as in rub-hard

jh—as in hedgehog m—as in mother

ñ—as in canyon y—as in yes

ṭ—as in tub, but with the tongue against the roof of the mouth r—as in run

ṭh—as in light-heart, but with the tongue against the roof of the mouth l—as in light

ḍ—as in dove, but with the tongue against the roof of the mouth v—as in vine

ḍh—as in red-hot, but with the tongue against the roof of the mouth ś (palatal) —as in the s in the German word sprechen

ṇ—as in nut, but with the tongue against the roof of the mouth ṣ (cerebral)—as the sh in shine

t—as in tub, but with the tongue against the teeth s (dental)—as in sun

th—as in light-heart, but with the tongue against the teeth h—as in home

SPECIAL LETTERS

ṁ (anusvāra)—a resonant nasal like the n in the French word bon

ḥ (visarga)—a final, echoed h-sound: aḥ is pronounce like aha; iḥ like ihi

[1] 1 Yojana: a unit of length found in ancient Indian scriptural and astronomical texts. These literatures seem to indicate the existence of two types of yojana

utilised for different purposes—the shorter being equal to 4.5 5 miles and the longer being equal to 8 9 miles, depending upon the specific source of information.

[2] 2 The form of Lord Matysa: four armed, holding a conch, disc, mace and lotus; blackish complexion; a horn on His head; looking like a fish; foot-like marks all over His body; human form from neck to navel and fish form from navel downwards.

[3] 3 The transcendental realm of Lord Matsya and the three worlds.

[4] 4 The duration of Brahma's one day has been given in the Naveen Bengali Dictionary of Aṣutoṣ Dev. Brahmā's day equals 4,320,000,000 years and is called a kalpa. The duration of the reign of one Manu is known as a manvantara and one day of Brahmā consists of the reign of 14 such Manus.

[5] 5 Krośa: a distance of two miles.

[6] 1 Seeing Varāhadeva within the water (Rāsatala), the demon Hiraṇyākṣa misunderstood the Lord to be an ordinary boar. Considering Him to possess meager strength, he spoke many deriding words. The Lord, however, returned his taunts with equal vigor. Lord Varāha dodged the violent mace-blows of the angry demon Hiraṇyākṣa, and thus a violent mace-fight began between the two. Lord Brahmā prayed to the Supreme Lord to please kill Hiraṇyākṣa in the 'loka-saṁhāra-karini-saṁdhya' in the auspicious period known as Abhijit (during the evening in conjunction with the Abhijit star—the time that would be the most favourable for the destruction of a demon). After that, during the demoniac hours, the powers of the demon would increase manifold.

Hiraṇyākṣa displayed his prowess by using the mace and trident, and finally by

casting illusions and striking hard with his fists, but the Lord killed the demon by a severe kick. This pastime has been described in the 3rd Canto, Chapters 18 and 19 of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam.

[7] 1 A well without water is known as a dark well. No man goes to such a waterless well, for if someone falls into that well, his rescue is very unlikely. Similarly, the house in which sādhus are not received cordially and in which, being deprived of the association of sādhus, the residents are engaged in sense enjoyment, is like a dark well. There is no possibility of rescue for the residents of such a house. Therefore, such a place of downfall of the corporeal soul (like falling into a dark well) is to be abandoned.

*vanaṁ tu sāttviko vāso grāmo rājasa ucyate tāmasaṁ dyūta-sadanaṁ man-
niketaṁ tu nirguṇam*

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 11.25.25)

“Living in the forest signifies sāttvika-vāsa—a pious residence with apathy toward worldly interests, rājasa-vāsa indicates a princely residence with earthly pleasures and luxury, tāmasa-vāsa indicates a residence of gambling—living in vices, and nirguṇa-vāsa indicates the highest transcendental realm of God.”

[8] The qualities of a guru:

*tad-vijñānārthaṁ sa gurum evābhigacchet samit-pāṇiḥ śrotriyaṁ brahma-
niṣṭham*

(Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad 1.2.12)

“To learn transcendental subject matter, one must humbly approach with firewood in hand, a spiritual master who is learned in the Vedas and firmly devoted to the Absolute Truth.”

tasmād gurum prapadyeta jijñāsuḥ śreya uttamam śābde pare ca niṣṇātaṁ

brahmaṇy upaśamāśrayam

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 11.3.21)

“Therefore, anyone who seriously desires real happiness must seek a bona fide spiritual master and take shelter of him by initiation. The qualification of the bona fide guru is that he has realized the conclusions of the scriptures by deliberation and is able to convince others of these conclusions. Such great personalities who have taken shelter of the Supreme Lord, leaving aside all material considerations, should be understood to be bona fide spiritual masters.”

[9] Śrotriya has two interpretations: (1) Well-versed in the Vedas and (2) ontological divine knowledge received through the preceptorial channel.

[10] Gṛhavrata: One who moves around the house or property, i.e. one who engages his sense organs and energy for the sake of material property and consequently becomes attached to it.

However, saints also remain in a house, so it is said that the house also signifies the wife and material life. One who moves around wife or family or engages the senses and energy for them is considered a gṛhavrata.

The real self is ātmā (soul). So the gross and subtle bodies are also like houses. One who devotes his energy for the gross and subtle bodies is also a gṛhavrata.

Since all gṛhavratas are embodied souls, by the unrestricted use of the sense organs they will all enter into nescience and the inferno of material life. Six billion such enslaved corporeal souls of the world cannot rescue even a single person from the shackles of worldly bondage. A perfect emancipated realised soul can rescue the whole world or universe. But such realised souls are very rare. If one wants quality, one must sacrifice quantity. It is impossible to get both at the same time.

[11] Two of Kaśyapa Ṛṣi’s wives—Diti and Aditi are mentioned here in connection with this topic. The sons of Diti are demons and the sons of Aditi are demigods. The demons and the demigods are stepbrothers.

[12] One celestial day is equal to one year of the human beings, i.e. 365 days.

[13] This material brahmānda of fourteen worlds, including heaven, is non-eternal. From the churning of the milk ocean, ‘amṛta’ (nectar of immortality) emerges. By drinking this amṛta, the demigods become immortal in the sense that they gain extraordinary longevity, but they do not become literally immortal. At the time of universal dissolution, all the brahmāndas or material universes are destroyed, along with the demigods.

[14] Ṛcīka Muni was born as the son of Ourba in the lineage of Bhṛgu, the mind-born son of Brahmā.

[15] Akṣauhiṇī: 109,350 infantry soldiers, 65,610 horses, 21,870 elephants and 21,870 chariots—a total of 218,700 forming a very large military phalanx.

*ekabhaikarathā tryaśvā pattīḥ pañcapadātikā patyagaiṅstiguṇeḥ sarvaiḥ
kramādākhyā yathotaram senāmukhaṁ gulmagaṇau vāhinī pūtanā camuḥ
anīkīnī daśānīkīnya kṣauhiṇī*

(Amarakoṣa-grantha)

“1 elephant, 1 chariot, 3 horses and 5 infantry soldiers are called a patti. Each element of a patti, when multiplied by three, i.e. 3 elephants, 3 chariots, 9 horses and 15 infantry soldiers, is called a senā-mukha. Three senā-mukhas constitute one gulma, three gulmas constitute one vāhinī, three vāhinīs constitute one pūtanā, three pūtanās constitute one camū, three camūs constitute one anīkinī, and ten anīkinīs constitute one akṣauhiṇī.”

(from the Naveen Bengali Dictionary of Aṣutoṣ Dev)

[16] Śrī Viśvanātha Cakravartīpāda has written in his commentary, “As Jamadagni ordered the killing of the innocent crown-gem of all devoted wives —‘Renuka’, it has been demonstrated that Jamadagni was also killed in turn for this offence.”

[17] There may be doubt as to whether the word ‘portion’ is appropriate for expressing the expanded forms of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, expanded forms of Baladeva or puruṣa-avatāras and others, because all the expanded forms are ontologically non-different from each other. Differences exist only in the manifestation of qualities. As all the forms are transcendental, Their qualities are also transcendental. It is better to write ‘aṁśa-avatāra’ or ‘aṁśāṁśa-avatāra’. The word ‘avatāra’ should be added to avoid confusion.

svāṁśa-vistāra— catur-vyūha, avatara-gaṇa vibhinnāṁśa jīva— tāṁra śaktite gaṇana

(Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 22.9)

[18] The Causal Ocean of Creation (the material energy consisting of three primal qualities— sattva-guna, rajo-guna and tamo-guna in a dormant state). ‘Sa aikhata’ ‘eko’ham bahuśyāmi’: Kāraṇodakaśāyī Mahā-Viṣṇu observes and desires to become many, so He imparts conscious energy and infinite Brahmaṇḍas are created.

[19] The Supreme Lord Himself kills only fortunate persons because as a result, they attain a meritorious destination.

[20] A Bengali reference encyclopedia

[21] Gayā Region: This is famous as Bodha Gayā or Buddha Gayā. This is the most important pilgrimage place of Buddhists. This place was famous even before the time of Christ. The remains of the Mahābodhi Temple and the Stupa (monument), built by King Aśoka, are evidence of its fame and antiquity. The Pippala tree (ficus religiosa), under which Buddha attained enlightenment, is still there today. In the journey diary of the Chinese traveller, Fahian, a description of the Mahābodhi Temple of Uruvilvā has been provided.

[22] The mode of ignorance.

[23] In the scriptures animal sacrifice is specified to enable society to gradually rise above violent tendencies.

[24] Suta' means 'son'.

[25] Śuklā-pakṣa: The moonlit half of a lunar month—the bright fortnight.

[26] Jyaiṣṭha month: the 2nd month of the Hindu (Lunar) calendar (Summer).

[27] Pauṣa month: the 9th month of the Hindu (Lunar) Calendar (Winter).

[28] Vaiśākha month: the 1st month of the Hindu (Lunar) Calendar.

[29] 'Lankāvatāra-sūtra' was published with the help of the Indian Buddhist Text Society and Bengal Government in January 1900 A.D.

[30] In the 21st issue of the 18th volume of Gauḍīya (Magazine), in the articles of Śrīla Saccidānanda Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura entitled, 'Pracchanna Bauddha and Nāstikyavāda' (Disguised Bauddha and Atheism) and 'Gautama' as well as in the book 'Śrī Gauḍīya Darśana: History and Elements' by Śrī Sundarānanda Vidyāvinodā (a disciple of Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Ṭhākura), the name of Śākyasiṃha Gautama Buddha has rarely appeared while writing about the Buddhist philosophy.

Pūjyapāda Tridandi Svāmī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Mahārāja, the beloved disciple of Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Ṭhākura and founder of Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti, in his writing, ‘Māyāvādera Jīvanī’ (The Life History of Impersonalism), has written:

“The līlā of the Supreme Lord, the expansion of the Lord, Buddha, appeared around 3500 B.C.” (Page 74)

“Nihilistic Siddhārtha was the disciple of Sage Gautama of Kapila’s lineage. Therefore, his other name is Gautama.” (Page 14)

“Śākyasiṃha Buddha appeared around five hundred years before.” (Page 18)

[31] Buddha married Yaśodharā at the age of sixteen years. Buddha renounced the world at the age of twenty-nine years. He attained emancipation at the age of eighty years (New Bengali Dictionary of Aṣutoṣh Dev)

[32] Śambhala: Its present name is Śambhalapura. According to the encyclopedia, this place is in Goṇḍuvānā region. Alternately, it is considered to be in Murādābād. It is said in Kalki Purāṇa that there are sixty places of pilgrimage in this area. To remove the ill effects of Kali, the Supreme Lord will appear here as Kalki and reside here for thousands of years with His entourage.